THE PRAIRIE.

THE

PRAIRIE,

A TALE,

BY THE AUTHOR OF

THE SPY, THE PILOT,

&c. &c.

"Mark his condition, and the event; then tell me,
If this might be a brother."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE PRAIRIE.

CHAPTER I.

Would it were bed time, Hal, and all well.

SHAKSPEARE.

A SECOND glance sufficed to convince the whole of the startled party, that the young Pawnee, whom they had already encountered, again stood before them. Surprise kept both sides mute, and more than a minute was passed in surveying each other with eyes of astonishment, if not of distrust. The wonder of the young warrior was, however, much more tempered and dignified than that of his Christian acquaintances. While Mid-

dleton and Paul felt the tremor, which shook the persons of their dependant companions, thrilling through their own quickened blood, the glowing eye of the Indian rolled from one to another, as if it could never quail before the rudest assaults. His gaze, after making the circuit of every wondering countenance, finally settled in a proud and steady look on the equally immoveable features of the trapper. The silence was first broken by Dr. Battius, in the ejaculation of—

"*Order*, primates; *genus*, homo; *species*, prairie!"

"Ay—ay—the secret is out," said the old trapper, shaking his head, like one who congratulated himself on having mastered the mystery of some knotty difficulty. "The lad has been in the grass for a cover; the fire has come upon him in his sleep, and, having lost his horse, he has been driven to save himself under that fresh hide of a buf-

falo. No bad invention, when powder and flint were wanting to kindle a ring. I warrant me, now, this is a clever youth, and one that it would be safe to journey with. I will speak to him kindly, for anger can at least serve no turn of ours. My brother is welcome again," using the language, which the other understood; "the Tetons have been smoking him as they would a racoon."

The young Pawnee rolled his eye over the place, as if he were examining the terrific danger from which he had just escaped, but he disdained to betray the smallest emotion at its imminency. His brow contracted, as he answered to the remark of the trapper by saying—

"A Teton is a dog. When the Pawnee war whoop is in their ears, the whole nation howls."

"It is true. The imps are on our trail, and I am glad to meet a warrior, with the tomahawk in his hand, who

does not love them. Will my brother lead my children to his village? If the Siouxes follow on our path, my young men shall help him to strike them."

The young Pawnee warrior turned his eyes from one to another of the strangers, in a keen scrutiny, before he saw fit to answer so important an interrogatory. His examination of the males was short, and apparently satisfactory. But his gaze was fastened long and admiringly, as in their former interview, on the surpassing and unwonted beauty of a being so fair and so unknown as Inez. Though his glance wandered for moments from her countenance to the more intelligible and yet extraordinary charms of Ellen, it did not fail to return promply to the study of a creature, who, in the view of his unpractised eye and untutored imagination, was formed with all that perfection, with which the youthful poet is apt to endow the glowing images of his heated brain.

Nothing so fair, so ideal, so every way worthy to reward the courage and self-devotion of a warrior, had ever before been encountered on the prairies, and the young brave appeared to be deeply and intuitively sensible to the influence of so rare a model of the loveliness of the sex. Perceiving, however, that his gaze gave uneasiness to the subject of his admiration, he withdrew his eyes, and laying his hand impressively on his chest, he modestly answered—

"My father shall be welcome. The young men of my nation shall hunt with his sons; the chiefs shall smoke with the grey-head. The Pawnee girls will sing in the ears of his daughters."

"And if we meet the Tetons?" demanded the trapper, who wished to understand thoroughly the more important conditions of this new alliance.

"The enemy of the Big-knives shall feel the blow of the Pawnee."

"It is well. Now let my brother

and I meet in council, that we may not go on a crooked path, but that our road to his village may be like the flight of the pigeons."

The young Pawnee made a significant gesture of assent, and followed the other a little apart, in order to be removed from all danger of interruption from the reckless Paul or the abstracted naturalist. Their conference was short, but as it was conducted in the sententious manner of the natives, it served to make each of the parties acquainted with all the necessary information of the other. When they rejoined their associates, the old man saw fit to explain a portion of what had passed between them, as follows—

"Ay, I was not mistaken," he said; "this good-looking young warrior—for good-looking and noble-looking he is, though a little horrified perhaps with paint — this good-looking youth, then, tells me he is out on the scout for these

very Tetons. His party was not strong enough to strike the devils, who are down from their towns in great numbers to hunt the buffalo, and runners have gone to the Pawnee villages for aid. It would seem that this lad is a fearless boy, for he has been hanging on their skirts alone, until, like ourselves, he was driven to the grass for a cover. But he tells me more, my men, and what I am mainly sorry to hear, which is, that the cunning Mahtoree, instead of going to blows with the squatter, has become his friend, and that both broods, red and white, are on our heels, and outlying around this very burning plain to circumvent us to our destruction."

"How knows he all this to be true?' demanded Middleton.

"Anan?"

"In what manner does he know that these things are so?"

"In what manner! Do you think news-papers and town criers are needed

to tell a scout what is doing on the prairies, as they are in the bosom of the States. No gossipping woman, who hurries from house to house to spread evil of her neighbour, can carry tidings with her tongue so fast as these people will spread their meaning by signs and warnings, that they alone understand. 'Tis their l'arning, and what is better, it is got in the open air, and not within the walls of a school. I tell you, captain, that what he says is true."

"For that matter," said Paul, "I'm ready to swear it. It is reasonable, and therefore it must be true."

"And well you might, lad; well you might. He furthermore declares, that my old eyes for once were true to me, and that the river lies, hereaway, at about the distance of half a league. You see the fire has done most of its work in that quarter, and our path is clouded in smoke. He also agrees that

it is needful to wash our trail in water. Yes, we must put that river atween us and the Sioux eyes, and then, by the favour of the Lord, not forgetting our own industry, we may gain the village of the Loups."

"Words will not forward us a foot," said Middleton: "let us move."

The old man assented, and the party once more prepared to renew its route. The Pawnee threw the skin of the buffalo over his shoulder and led the advance, casting many a stolen glance behind him as he proceeded, in order to fix his gaze on the extraordinary and to him unaccountable loveliness of the unconscious Inez.

An hour sufficed to bring the fugitives to the banks of the stream, which was one of the hundred rivers that serve to conduct, through the mighty arteries of the Missouri and Mississipi, the waters of that vast and still uninhabited region to the ocean. The river was not deep, but

its current was troubled and rapid. The flames had scorched the earth to its very margin, and as the warm steams of the fluid mingled in the cooler air of the morning, with the smoke of the still raging conflagration, most of its surface was wrapped in a mantle of moving vapour. The trapper pointed out the circumstance with pleasure, saying as he assisted Inez to dismount on the margin of the water-course—

"The knaves have outwitted themselves! I am far from certain that I should not have fired the prairie, to have got the benefit of this very smoke to hide our movements, had not the heartless imps saved us the trouble. I've known such things done in my day, and done with success. Come, lady, put your tender foot upon the ground—for a fearful time has it been to one of your breeding and skeary qualities. Ah's me! what have I not known the young, and the delicate, and the virtuous, and the modest to

undergo, in my time, among the horrifications and circumventions of Indian warfare! Come, it is a short quarter of a mile to the other bank, and then our trail, at least, will be broken."

Paul had by this time assisted Ellen to dismount, and he now stood looking, with rueful eyes, at the naked banks of the river. Neither tree nor shrub grew along its borders, with the exception of here and there a solitary thicket of low bushes, from among which it would not have been an easy matter to have found a dozen stems of a size sufficient to make an ordinary walking-stick.

"Harkee, old trapper," the moody-looking bee-hunter exclaimed; "it is very well to talk of the other side of this ripple of a river, or brook, or whatever you may call it, but in my judgment it would be a smart rifle that would throw its lead across it—that is to any detriment to Indian or deer."

"That it would—that it would;

though I carry a piece here, that has done its work in time of need, at as great a distance."

"And do you mean to shoot Ellen and the captain's lady across; or do you intend them to go, trout fashion, with their mouths under water?"

"Is this river too deep to be forded?" asked Middleton, who like Paul, began to consider the impossibility of transporting her, whose safety he valued more than his own, to the opposite shore.

"When the mountains above feed it with their torrents it is, as you see, a swift and powerful stream. Yet have I crossed its sandy bed, in my time, without wetting a knee. But we have the Sioux horses: I warrant me, that the kicking imps will swim like so many deer."

"Old trapper," said Paul, thrusting his fingers into his mop of a head, as was usual with him, when any difficulty

confounded his philosophy, "I have swam like a fish in my day, and I can do it again, where there is need; nor do I much regard the weather; but I question if you get Nelly to sit a horse, with this water whirling like a mill-race before her eyes; besides, it is manifest the thing is not to be done dry-shod."

"Ah, the lad is right. We must to our inventions therefore, or the river cannot be crossed." Then cutting the discourse short, he turned to the Pawnee, and explained to him the difficulty which existed in relation to the women. The young warrior listened gravely, and throwing the buffalo skin from his shoulder he immediately commenced, assisted by the occasional aid of the understanding old man, the preparations necessary to effect this desirable object.

The hide was soon drawn into the shape of an umbrella top, or an inverted parachute, by thongs of deer skin, with which both the labourers were well pro-

vided. A few light sticks served to keep the parts from collapsing, or falling in. When this simple and natural expedient was arranged, it was placed on the water, the Indian making a sign that it was ready to receive its freight. Both Inez and Ellen hesitated to trust themselves in a bark of so frail a construction, nor would Middleton or Paul consent that they should do so, until each had assured himself, by actual experiment, that the vessel was capable of sustaining a load much heavier than it was destined to receive. Then, indeed, their scruples were reluctantly overcome, and the skin was made to receive its precious burthen.

"Now leave the Pawnee to be the pilot," said the trapper; "my hand is not so steady as it used to be; but he has limbs like toughened hickory. Leave all to the wisdom of the Pawnee."

The husband and lover could not well do otherwise, and they were fain to be-

come deeply interested, it is true, but passive spectators of this primitive species of ferrying. The Pawnee selected the beast of Mahtoree, from among the three horses with a readiness that proved he was far from being ignorant of the properties of that noble animal, and throwing himself upon its back he rode into the margin of the river. Thrusting an end of his lance into the hide, he bore the light vessel up against the stream, and giving his steed the rein, they pushed boldly into the current. Middleton and Paul followed, pressing as nigh the bark as prudence would at all warrant. In this manner the young warrior bore his precious cargo to the opposite bank in perfect safety, without the slightest inconvenience to the passengers, and with the steadiness and celerity which proved both horse and rider were not unused to the operation. When the shore was gained, the young Indian undid his work, threw the skin

over his shoulder, placed the sticks under his arm, and returned without speaking, to transfer the remainder of the party, in a similar manner, to what was very justly considered the safer side of the river.

"Now, friend Doctor," said the old man, when he saw the Indian plunging into the river a second time, "do I know there is faith in yonder Red-skin. He is a good-looking, ay, and an honest looking youth, but the winds of Heaven are not more deceitful than these savages, when the devil has fairly beset them. Had the Pawnee been a Teton, or one of them heartless Mingoes, that used to be prowling through the woods of York, a time back, that is some sixty years agone, we should have seen his back and not his face turned towards us. My heart had its misgivings, when I saw the lad choose the better horse; for it would be as easy to leave us with that beast, as it would for a nimble

pigeon to part company from a flock of noisy and heavy winged crows. But you see that truth is in the boy, and make a Red-skin once your friend, he is yours so long as you deal honestly by him."

"What may be the distance to the sources of this stream?" demanded Doctor Battius, whose eyes were rolling over the whirling eddies of the current, with a very portentous expression of doubt. "At what distance may its secret springs be found?"

"That may be as the weather proves. I warrant me your legs would be a-weary, before you had followed its bed into the Rocky Mountains; but then there are seasons, when it might be done without wetting a foot."

"And in what particular divisions of the year do these periodical seasons occur?"

"He that passes this spot a few months from this time, will find that

foaming water-course a desert of drifting sand."

The naturalist pondered deeply. Like most others, who are not endowed with a superfluity of physical fortitude, the worthy man had found the danger of passing the river in so simple a manner, magnifying itself in his eyes so rapidly, as the moment of adventure approached, that he actually contemplated the desperate effort of going round the river, in order to escape the hazard of crossing it. It may not be necessary to dwell on the incredible ingenuity, with which terror will at any time prop a tottering argument. The worthy Obed had gone over the whole subject, with commendable diligence, and had just arrived at the consoling conclusion, that there was nearly as much glory in discerning the hidden sources of so considerable a stream, as in adding a plant or an insect to the lists of the learned, when the Pawnee reached the shore for the

second time. The old man took his seat, with the utmost deliberation, in the vessel of skin, (so soon as it had been duly arranged for his reception,) and having carefully disposed of Hector between his legs, he beckoned to his companion to occupy the third place.

The naturalist placed a foot in the frail vessel, as an elephant will try a bridge, or a horse is often seen to make a similar experiment, before he will trust the whole of his corporeal treasure on the dreaded flatt, and then withdrew just as the old man believed he was about to seat himself.

"Venerable Venator," he said, mournfully, "this is a most unscientific bark. There is an inward monitor, which bids me distrust its security!"

"Anan?" said the old man, who was pinching the ears of the hound, as a father would play with the same member in a favourite child.

"I incline not to this irregular mode

of experimenting on fluids. The vessel has neither form nor proportions.

"It is not as handsomely turned as I have seen a canoe in birchen bark, but comfort may be taken in a wigwam, as well as in a palace."

"It is impossible that any vessel constructed on principles so repugnant to science can be safe. This tub, venerable hunter, will never reach the opposite shore in safety."

"You are a witness of what it has done."

"Ay; but it was an anomaly in prosperity. If exceptions were to be taken as rules, in the government of things, the human race would speedily be plunged in the abysses of ignorance. Venerable trapper, this expedient, in which you would repose your safety, is, in the annals of regular inventions, what a lusus naturæ may be termed in the lists of natural history—a monster!"

How much longer Dr. Battius might have felt disposed to prolong the dis-

course, it is difficult to say, for in addition to the powerful personal considerations, which induced him to procrastinate an experiment, which was certainly not without its dangers, the pride of reason was beginning to sustain him in the discussion. But, fortunately for the credit of the old man's forbearance, when the naturalist reached the word, with which he terminated his last speech, a sound arose in the air, that seemed a sort of supernatural echo to the idea itself. The young Pawnee, who had awaited the termination of the incomprehensible discussion, with grave and characteristic patience, raised his head and listened to the unknown cry, like a stag whose mysterious faculties had detected the footsteps of the distant hounds in the gale. The trapper and the Doctor were not, however, entirely so uninstructed as to the nature of the extraordinary sounds. The latter recognised in them the well-known voice

of his own beast; and he was about to rush up the little bank, which confined the current, with all the longings of a strong affection, when Asinus himself galloped into view, at no great distance, urged to the unnatural gait, by the impatient and brutal Weucha, who bestrode him.

The eyes of the Teton, and those of the fugitives met. The former raised a long, loud, and piercing yell, in which the notes of exultation were fearfully blended with those of warning. The signal served for a finishing blow to the discussion on the merits of the bark, the Doctor stepping as promptly to the side of the old man, as though a mental mist had been miraculously removed from his eyes. In another instant the steed of the young Pawnee was struggling powerfully with the torrent.

The utmost strength of the horse was needed to urge the fugitives beyond the flight of arrows that came sailing through the air, at the next moment.

The cry of Weucha had brought fifty of his comrades to the shore, but fortunately among them all was not one of a rank sufficient to entitle him to the privilege of bearing a fusee. One half the stream, however, was not passed, before the form of Mahtoree himself was seen on its bank, and an ineffectual discharge of fire-arms announced the rage and disappointment of the chief. More than once the trapper had raised his rifle, as if about to try its power on his enemies, but he as often lowered it, without firing. The eyes of the Pawnee warrior glared like those of the cougar at the sight of so many of the hostile tribe, and he answered to the impotent effort of their chief, by tossing a hand into the air in contempt, and raising the war cry of his nation. The challenge was too taunting to be endured. The Tetons dashed into the stream in a body, and the river became dotted with the dark forms of beasts and riders.

There was now a fearful struggle for the friendly bank. As the Dahcotahs advanced with beasts, which had not, like that of the Pawnee, expended their strength in former efforts, and as they now moved unincumbered by any thing but their riders, the speed of the pursuers greatly outstripped that of the fugitives. The trapper, who clearly comprehended the whole danger of their situation, calmly turned his eyes from the Tetons to his young Indian associate, in order to examine whether the resolution of the latter began to falter, as the former lessened the distance between them. Instead of betraying fear, however, or any of that concern which might so readily have been excited by the peculiarity of his risque, the brow of the young warrior contracted to a look which indicated high and deadly hostility.

"Do you greatly value life, friend Doctor?" demanded the old man, with

a sort of philosophical calmness, which made the question doubly appalling to his companion.

"Not for itself," returned the naturalist, sipping some of the water of the river from the hollow of his hand, in order to clear his husky throat—"not for itself, but exceedingly, inasmuch as natural history has so deep a stake in my existence. Therefore—"

"Ay!" resumed the other, who mused too deeply to dissect the ideas of the Doctor with his usual sagacity; "'tis in truth the history of natur', and a base and craven feeling it is! Now is life as precious to this young Pawnee, as to any governor in the States, and he might save it, or at least stand some chance of saving it, by letting us go down the stream; and yet you see he keeps his faith manfully, and like an Indian warrior. For myself, I am old, and willing to take the fortune that the

Lord may see fit to give, nor do I conceit that you are of much benefit to mankind; and it is a crying shame, if not a sin, that so fine a youth as this should lose his scalp for two beings so worthless as ourselves. I am therefore disposed, provided that it shall prove agreeable to you, to tell the lad to make the best of his way, and to leave us to the mercy of the Tetons."

"I repel the proposition, as repugnant to nature, and as treason to science!" exclaimed the alarmed naturalist.—"Our progress is miraculous: and as this admirable invention moves with so wonderful a facility, a few more minutes will serve to bring us to land."

The old man regarded him intently for an instant, and shaking his head, he said—

"Lord, what a thing is fear! it transforms the creatur's of the world and the craft of man, making that which is ugly,

seemly in our eyes, and that which is beautiful, unsightly! Lord, Lord, what a thing is fear!"

A termination was, however, put to the discussion, by the increasing interest of the chase. The horses of the Dahcotahs had by this time gained the middle of the current, and their riders were already filling the air with yells of triumph. At this moment, Middleton and Paul, who had led the females to a little thicket, appeared again on the margin of the stream, menacing their enemies with the rifle.

"Mount, mount," shouted the trapper, the instant he beheld them: "mount and fly, if you value those who lean on you for help. Mount and leave us in the hands of the Lord."

"Stoop your head, old trapper," returned the voice of Paul; "down with ye both into your nest. The Teton devil is in your line; down with your

heads, and make way for a Kentucky bullet."

The old man turned his head, and saw that the eager Mahtorce, who preceded his party some distance, had brought himself nearly in a line with the bark and the bee-hunter, who stood perfectly ready to execute his hostile threat. Bending his body low, the rifle was discharged, and the swift lead whizzed harmlessly past him on its more distant errand. But the eye of the Teton chief was not less quick and certain than that of his enemy. He threw himself from his horse the moment preceding the report, and sunk into the water. The beast snorted with terror and anguish, throwing half his form out of the river in a desperate plunge. Then he was seen drifting away in the torrent, and dying the turbid waters deeply with his blood.

The Teton chief soon re-appeared

on the surface, and understanding the nature of his loss, he swam with vigorous strokes to the nearest of the young men, who relinquished his steed, as a matter of course, to so renowned a warrior. The incident, however, created a confusion in the whole Dahcotah band, who appeared to await the intention of their leader, before they renewed their efforts to reach the shore. In the mean time the vessel of skin had reached the land, and the fugitives were once more united on the margin of the river.

The savages were now swimming about in indecision, as a flock of pigeons is often seen to hover in confusion after receiving a heavy discharge into its leading column, apparently hesitating on the risk of storming a bank so formidably defended. The well-known precaution of Indian warfare prevailed; and Mahtoree, admonished by his recent adventure, led his warriors back to

the shore from which they had come, in order to relieve their beasts, which were already becoming unruly.

"Now mount you, with the tender ones, and ride for yonder hillock," said the trapper. "Beyond it, you will find another stream, into which you must enter, and turning to the sun, follow its bed for a mile, until you reach a high and sandy plain; there will I meet you. Go, mount; this Pawnee youth and I, and my stout friend the physicianer, who is a desperate warrior, are men enough to keep the bank, seeing that show and not use is all that is needed."

Middleton and Paul saw no use in wasting their breath in remonstrances against this proposal. Glad to know that their rear was to be covered, even in this imperfect manner, they hastily got their horses in motion, and soon disappeared on the required route. Some twenty or thirty minutes succeeded this movement, before the Tetons on the

opposite shore, seemed inclined to enter on any new enterprize. Mahtorce was distinctly visible, in the midst of his warriors, issuing his mandates, and betraying his desire for vengeance, by occasionally shaking an arm in the direction of the fugitives; but no step was taken, which appeared to threaten any further act of immediate hostility. At length a yell arose among the savages, which announced the occurrence of some fresh event. Then Ishmael and his sluggish sons were seen in the distance, and soon the whole of the united force moved down to the very limits of the stream. The squatter proceeded to examine the position of his enemies with his usual coolness; and, as if to try the power of his rifle, he sent a bullet among them, with a force sufficient to do execution, even at the distance at which he stood.

"Now let us depart!" exclaimed Obed, endeavouring to catch a furtive

glimpse of the lead, which he fancied was whizzing at his very ear. "We have maintained the bank in a gallant manner, for a sufficient length of time; quite as much military skill is to be displayed in a retreat, as in an advance."

The old man cast a look behind him, and seeing that the equestrians had reached the cover of the hill, he made no objections to the proposal. The remaining horse was given to the Doctor, with instruction to pursue the course just taken by Middleton and Paul. When the naturalist was mounted and in full retreat, the trapper and the young Pawnee stole from the spot in such a manner as to leave their enemies some time in doubt as to their movements. Instead, however, of proceeding across the plain towards the hill, a route on which they must have been in open view, they took a shorter path, covered by the formation of the ground, and intersected the little water-course at the

point where Middleton had been directed to leave it, and just in season to join his party. The Doctor had used so much diligence in the retreat, as to have already overtaken his friends, and of course the fugitives were all again assembled.

The trapper now looked about him for some convenient spot where the whole party might halt, as he expressed it, for some five or six hours.

"Halt!" exclaimed the Doctor, when the alarming proposal reached his ears; "venerable hunter, it would seem that, on the contrary, many days should be passed in industrious flight."

Middleton and Paul were both of this opinion, and each in his particular manner expressed as much.

The old man heard them with patience, but shook his head, like one who was unconvinced: and then answered all their arguments in one general and positive reply.

"Why should we fly?" he asked.

"Can the legs of mortal men outstrip the speed of horses? Do you think the Tetons will lie down and sleep; or will they cross the water and nose for our trail. Thanks be to the Lord, we have washed it well in this stream, and if we leave the place with discretion and wisdom, we may yet throw them off its track. But a prairie is not a wood. *There* a man may journey long, caring for nothing but the prints his moccasin leaves; whereas, in these open plains, a runner placed on yonder hill, for instance, could see far on every side of him, like a hovering hawk looking down on his prey. No, no; night must come, and darkness be upon us, afore we leave this spot. But listen to the words of the Pawnee; he is a lad of spirit, and I warrant me many is the hard race that he has run with the Sioux bands. Does my brother think our trail is long enough?" he then demanded, in the Indian tongue.

" Is a Teton a fish, that he can see it in the river?"

" But my young men think we should stretch it, until it reaches across the prairie."

" Mahtoree has eyes; he will see it."

" What does my brother council?"

The young warrior studied the heavens a moment, and appeared to hesitate. He mused some time within himself, and then he replied, like one whose opinion was irrevocably fixed.

"The Dahcotahs are not asleep," he said; " we must lie in the grass."

" Ah! the lad is of my mind," said the old man, briefly explaining the opinion of his companion to his white friends. Middleton was obliged to acquiesce, and as it was confessedly dangerous to remain upon their feet, each one set about assisting in the means to be adopted for their security. Inez and Ellen were quickly bestowed, beneath the warm and not uncomfort-

able shelter of the buffalo skins, which formed a thick covering; and tall grass was drawn over the place in such a manner, as to evade any examination from a common eye. Paul and the Pawnee fettered the beasts and cast them to the earth, where, after supplying them with food, they were also left concealed in the fog of the prairie. No time was lost, when these several arrangements were completed, before each of the others sought a place of rest and concealment, and then the plain appeared again deserted to its solitude.

The old man had advised his companions of the absolute necessity of their continuing for hours in this concealment. All their hopes of escape depended on the success of the artifice. If they might elude the cunning of their pursuers, by this simple, and therefore less suspected expedient, they could renew their flight as the evening

approached ; and by changing their course, the chance of final success would be greatly increased . Influ- enced by these momentous considera- tions, the whole party lay musing on their situation, until thoughts grew weary, and sleep finally settled on them all, one after another.

The deepest silence had prevailed for hours, when the quick ears of the trapper and the Pawnee, were startled by a faint cry of surprise from Inez. Springing to their feet, like men about to struggle for their lives, they found the vast plain, the rolling swells, the little hillock, and the scattered thickets, covered alike in one, white, dazzling sheet of snow.

"The Lord have mercy on ye all!" exclaimed the old man, regarding the prospect with a rueful eye. "Now, Pawnee, do I know the reason why you studied the clouds so closely; but it is too late! A squirrel would leave

his trail on this light coating of the 'arth. Ha! there come the imps to a certainty. Down with ye all, down with ye; your chance is but small, and yet it must not be wilfully cast away."

The whole party was instantly concealed again, though many an anxious and stolen glance was directed, through the tops of the grass, on the movements of their enemies. At the distance of half a mile, the Teton band was seen riding in a circuit, which was gradually contracting itself, and evidently closing upon the very spot where the fugitives lay. There was but little difficulty in solving the mystery of this movement. The snow had fallen in time to assure them, that those they sought were in their rear; and they were now employed, with the unwearied perseverance and patience of Indian warriors, in circling the certain boundaries of their place of concealment.

Each minute added to the jeopardy

of the fugitives. Paul and Middleton deliberately prepared their rifles; and as the earnestly occupied Mahtoree came at length within fifty feet of them, keeping his eyes rivetted on the grass through which he rode, they levelled them together and pulled the triggers. The effort was answered by the mere snapping of the locks.

"Enough," said the old man, rising with dignity; "I have cast away the priming; for certain death would follow your rashness. Now let us meet our fates like men. Cringing and complaining find no favour in Indian eyes."

His appearance was greeted by a yell, that spread far and wide over the plain; and in a moment a hundred savages were seen riding madly to the spot. Mahtoree received his prisoners with great self-restraint, though a single gleam of fierce joy broke though his clouded brow; and the heart of Middleton grew cold, as he caught the expres-

sion of that eye, which the chief turned on the nearly insensible but still lovely Inez.

The exultation of receiving the white captives was so great, as for a time to throw the dark and immoveable form of their young Indian companion entirely out of view. He stood apart, disdaining to turn an eye on his enemies, as motionless as though he were frozen in that attitude of dignity and composure. But when a little time had passed, even this secondary object attracted the attention of the Tetons. Then it was that the trapper first learned, by the shout of triumph, and the long drawn yell of delight, which burst at once from a hundred throats, as well as by the terrible name, which filled the air, that his youthful friend was no other than that redoubtable and hitherto invincible warrior, the mighty Hard-Heart.

CHAPTER II.

What, are ancient Pistol and
You friends yet?

SHAKSPEARE.

THE curtain of our imperfect drama must fall, to rise upon another scene. The time is advanced several days, during which very material changes had occurred in the situation of the actors. The hour is noon, and the place an elevated plain, that rose at no great distance from the water, somewhat abruptly, from the fertile bottom, which stretched along the margin of one of the numberless water-courses of that region. The river took its rise near the base of the Rocky Mountains,

and after washing a vast extent of plain, it mingled its waters with a still larger stream, to become finally lost in the turbid current of the Missouri.

The landscape was changed materially for the better; though the hand, which had impressed so much of the desert on the surrounding region, had laid a portion of its power on this spot. The appearance of vegetation was, however, less discouraging than in the more sterile wastes of the rolling prairies. Clusters of trees were scattered in greater profusion, and a long outline of ragged forest marked the northern boundary of the view. Here and there, on the bottom, were to be seen the evidences of a hasty and imperfect culture of such indigenous vegetables as were of a quick growth, and which were known to flourish without the aid of art, in deep and alluvial soils. On the very edge of what might be called the table-land, were pitched the hundred

lodges of a horde of wandering Siouxes. Their light tenements were arranged without the least attention to order. Proximity to the water seemed to be the only consideration which had been consulted in their disposition, nor had even this important convenience been always regarded. While most of the lodges stood along the brow of the plain, many were to be seen at greater distances, occupying such places as had first pleased the capricious eyes of their untutored owners. The encampment was not military, nor in the slightest degree protected from surprise by its position or defences. It was open on every side, and on every side as accessible as any other point in those wastes, if the imperfect and natural obstruction offered by the river, be excepted. In short, the place bore the appearance of having been tenanted longer than its occupants had originally intended: while it was not wanting in

the signs of readiness for a hasty, or even a compelled departure.

This was the temporary encampment of that portion of his people, who had long been hunting under the direction of Mahtoree, on those grounds which separated the stationary abodes of his nation, from those of the warlike tribes of the Pawnees. The lodges were tents of skin, high, conical, and of the most simple and primitive construction. The shield, the quiver, the lance, and the bow of its master, were to be seen suspended from a light post before the opening or door of each tenement. The different domestic implements of his one, two, or three wives, as the brave was of greater or lesser renown, were carelessly thrown at its side; and here and there the round, full, patient countenance of an infant might be found peeping from its comfortless wrappers of bark, as suspended by a deer-skin thong from the same post, it rocked in

the passing air. Children of a larger growth were tumbling over each other in piles, the males, even at that early age, making themselves distinguished for that species of domination which, in after life, was to mark the vast distinction between the sexes. Youths were in the bottom, essaying their juvenile powers in curbing the wild steeds of their fathers; while here and there a truant girl was to be seen, stealing from her labours to admire their fierce and impatient daring.

Thus far the picture was the daily exhibition of an encampment confident in its security. But immediately in front of the lodges was a gathering, that seemed to forbode some movements of much more than usual interest. A few of the withered and remorseless crones of the band were clustering together, in readiness to lend their fell voices, if needed, to aid in exciting their descendants to an exhibition, which their de-

praved tastes coveted, as beings of more humanized temperaments are known to love to look upon the interest of scarcely less appalling spectacles. The men were subdivided into groupes, assorted according to the deeds and reputations of the several individuals of whom they were composed.

They who were of that equivocal age which admitted them to the hunts, while their discretion was still too doubtful to permit them to be trusted on the war-path, hung around the skirts of the whole, catching, from the fierce models before them, that gravity of demeanour and restraint of manner, which in time was to become so deeply ingrafted in their own characters. A few of a still older class, and who had heard the whoop in anger, were a little more presuming, pressing nigher to the chiefs, though far from presuming to mingle in their councils, sufficiently distinguished by being permitted to

catch the wisdom which fell from lips so venerated. The ordinary warriors of the band were still less diffident, not hesitating to mingle among the chiefs of lesser note, though far from assuming the right to dispute the sentiments of any established brave, or to call in question the prudence of measures, that were recommended by the more gifted counsellors of the nation.

Among the chiefs themselves there was a singular compound of exterior. They were to be divided into two classes; those who were mainly indebted for their influence to physical causes and to deeds in arms, and those who had become distinguished rather for their wisdom than for their services in the field. The former was by far the most numerous and the most important class. They were men of stature and mien, whose stern countenances were often rendered doubly imposing, by those evidences of their valour,

which had been roughly traced on their lineaments by the hands of their enemies, in the shape of deep and indelible scars. That class which had gained its influence by a moral ascendancy, was extremely limited. They were uniformly to be distinguished by the quick and lively expression of their eyes, by the air of distrust that marked their movements, and occasionally by the vehemence of their utterance in those sudden outbreakings of the mind, by which their present consultations were from time to time distinguished.

In the very centre of a ring, formed by these chosen counsellors, was to be seen the person of the disquieted but seemingly calm Mahtoree. There was a conjunction of all the several qualities of the others in his person and character. Mind as well as matter had contributed to establish his authority. His scars were as numerous and deep as those of the whitest head in his

nation; his limbs were in their greatest vigour, his courage at its fullest height. Endowed with this rare combination of moral and physical influence, the keenest eye in all that assembly was wont to lower before his threatening glance. Courage and cunning had established his ascendancy, and it had been rendered, in some degree, sacred by time. He knew so well how to unite the powers of reason and force, that in a state of society which admitted of a greater display of his energies, the Teton would in all probability have been both a conqueror and a despot.

A little apart from the gathering of the band, was to be seen a set of beings of an entirely different origin. Taller and far more muscular in their persons, the lingering vestiges of their Saxon and Norman ancestry were yet to be found beneath the swarthy complexions which had been bestowed by an American sun. It would have been a curious

investigation, for one skilled in such an inquiry, to have traced those points of difference, by which the offspring of the most western European was still to be distinguished from the descendant of the most remote Asiatic, now that the two, in the revolutions of the world, were approximating in their habits, their residence, and not a little in their characters. The group of whom we write, was composed of the family of the squatter. They stood indolent, lounging, and inert, as usual, when no immediate demand was made on their dormant energies, clustered in front of some four or five habitations of skin, for which they were indebted to the hospitality of their Teton allies. The terms of their unexpected confederation were sufficiently explained, by the presence of the horses and domestic cattle, that were quietly grazing on the bottom beneath, under the jealous eyes of the spirited Hetty. Their waggons were

drawn about the lodges, in a sort of irregular barrier, which at once manifested that their confidence was not entirely restored, while, on the other hand, their policy or indolence prevented any very positive exhibition of distrust. There was a singular union of passive enjoyment and of dull curiosity slumbering in every dull countenance, as each of the party stood leaning on his rifle, regarding the movements of the Sioux conference. Still no sign of expectation or interest escaped from the youngest among them, the whole appearing to emulate the most phlegmatic of their savage allies, in an exhibition of the commendable quality of patience. They rarely spoke; and when they did, it was in some short and contemptuous remark, which served to put the physical superiority of a white man and that of an Indian in a sufficiently striking point of view. In short, the family of Ishmael appeared now to

be in the plenitude of an enjoyment, which depended on inactivity, but which was not entirely free from certain confused glimmerings of a perspective, in which their security stood in some little danger of a rude interruption from Teton treachery. Abiram, alone, formed a solitary exception to this state of equivocal repose.

After a life passed in the commission of a thousand mean and insignificant villanies, the mind of the kidnapper had become hardy enough to attempt the desperate adventure which has been laid before the reader, in the course of our narrative. His influence over the bolder, but less active spirit of Ishmael, was far from great; and had not the latter been suddenly expelled a fertile bottom, of which he had taken possession, with intent to keep it, without much deference to the forms of law, he would never have succeeded in enlisting the husband of his sister in an enterprise

that required so much decision and forethought. Their original success and subsequent disappointment have been seen; and Abiram now sat apart, plotting the means, by which he might secure to himself the advantages of his undertaking, which he perceived were each moment becoming more uncertain, through the open admiration of Mahtoree for the innocent subject of his villany. We shall leave him to his vacillating and confused expedients, in order to pass to the description of certain other personages in our drama.

There was still another corner of the picture that was occupied. On a little bank. at the extreme right of the encampment, lay the forms of Middleton and Paul. Their limbs were painfully bound with thongs, cut from that of a bison; while, by a sort of refinement in cruelty, they were so placed, that each could see a reflection of his own misery in that of his neighbour. Within a

dozen yards of them a post was set firmly in the ground, and against it was bound the light and Apollo-like person of Hard-Heart. Between the two stood the trapper, deprived of his rifle, his pouch, and his horn, but otherwise left in a sort of contemptuous liberty. Some five or six young warriors, however, with quivers at their backs, and long tough bows dangling from their shoulders, who stood with grave watchfulness at no great distance from the spot, sufficiently proclaimed how fruitless any attempt to escape, on the part of one so aged and so feeble, might prove. Unlike the other spectators of the important conference, these individuals were engaged in a discourse that for them contained an interest of its own.

"Captain," said the bee-hunter, with an expression of comical concern, that no misfortune could depress in one of his buoyant feelings, "do you really find that accursed strap of untanned

leather cutting into your shoulder, or is it only the tickling in my own arm that I feel?"

"When the spirit suffers so deeply, the body is insensible to pain," returned the more refined, though scarcely so spirited Middleton. "Would to Heaven that some of my trusty artillerists might fall upon this accursed encampment!"

"You might as well wish that these Teton lodges were so many hives of hornets, and that the insects would come forth and battle with yonder tribe of half naked savages." Then chuckling, with his own conceit, the bee-hunter turned away from his companion, and sought a momentary relief from his misery, by imagining that such a wild conceit might be realized, and fancying the manner in which the attack would upset even the well established patience of an Indian.

Middleton was glad to be silent: but the old man, who had listened to their

words, drew a little nigher and continued the discourse.

"Here is likely to be a merciless and a hellish business!" he said, shaking his head in a manner to prove that even his experience was at a loss for a remedy in so trying a dilemma. "Our Pawnee friend is already staked for the torture; and I well know, by the eye and the countenance of the great Sioux, that he is leading on the temper of his people to further enormities."

"Harkee, old trapper," said Paul, writhing in his bonds, to catch a glimpse of the other's melancholy face; "you ar' skilled in Indian tongues, and know somewhat of Indian deviltries. Go you to the council, and tell their chiefs in my name, that is to say, in the name of Paul Hover, of the State of Kentucky, that provided they will guarantee the safe return of one Ellen Wade into the States, they are welcome to take his scalp when and in such a manner as best suits

their amusements; or, if-so-be they will not trade on these conditions, you may throw in an hour or two of torture before hand, in order to sweeten the bargain to their damnable appetites."

"Ah! lad, it is little they would harken to such an offer, knowing as they do, that you are already like a bear in a trap, as little able to fight as to fly. But be not down-hearted, for the colour of a white man is sometimes his death-warrant among these far tribes of savages, and sometimes his shield. Though they love us not, cunning often ties their hands. Could the red nations work their will, trees would shortly be growing again on the ploughed fields of America, and woods would be whitened with Christian bones. No one can doubt that who knows the quality of the love which a Red-skin bears a Pale-face; but they have counted our numbers until their memories fail them, and they are not without their policy. Therefore is

our fate unsettled; but I fear me there is small hope left for the Pawnee!"

As the old man concluded, he walked slowly towards the subject of his latter observation, taking his post at no great distance from his side. Here he stood, observing such a silence and mien as became him to manifest, to a chief so renowned and so situated as his captive associate. But the eye of Hard-Heart was fastened on the distance, and his whole air was that of one whose thoughts were entirely removed from the present scene.

"The Siouxes are in council on my brother," the trapper at length observed, when he found he could only attract the other's attention by speaking.

The young partisan turned his head, with a calm smile, as he answered—

"They are counting the scalps over the lodge of Hard-Heart!"

"No doubt, no doubt: their tempers begin to mount, as they remem-

ber the number of Tetons you have struck; and better would it be for you now, had more of your days been spent in chasing the deer, and fewer on the war-path. Then some childless mother of this tribe might take you in the place of her lost son, and your time would be filled in peace."

"Does my father think that a warrior can ever die? The Master of Life does not open his hand to take away his gifts again. When he wants his young men he calls them, and they go. But the Red-skin he has once breathed on lives for ever."

"Ay, this is a more comfortable and a more humble faith than that which yonder heartless Teton harbours! There is something in these Loups which opens my inmost heart to them; they seem to have the courage, ay, and the honesty, too, of the Delawares of the hills. And this lad—it is wonderful, it is very wonderful—but the age,

and the eye, and the limbs, are as if they might have been brothers! Tell me, Pawnee, have you ever, in your traditions, heard of a mighty people, who once lived on the shores of the Salt-lake, hard by the rising sun?"

"The earth is white, by people of the colour of my father."

"Nay, nay, I speak not now of any strollers, who have crept into the land to rob the lawful owners of their birthright; but of a people who are, or rather were, what with nature and what with paint, red as the berry on the bush."

"I have heard the old men say, that there were bands, who hid themselves in the woods under the rising sun, because they dared not come upon the open prairies with men."

"Do not your traditions tell you of the greatest, the bravest, and the wisest nation of Red-skins that the Wahcondah has ever breathed upon?"

Hard-Heart raised his head, with a

loftiness and dignity that even his bonds could not repress, as he answered—

"Has age blinded my father; or does he see so many Siouxes, that he believes there are no longer any Pawnees?"

"Ah! such is mortal vanity and pride!" exclaimed the disappointed old man, in English. "Natur' is as strong in a Red-skin, as in the bosom of a man of white gifts. Now would a Delaware conceit himself far mightier than a Pawnee, just as a Pawnee boasts himself to be of the princes of the 'arth. And so it was atween the Frenchers of the Canadas, and the red-coated English, that the king did use to send into the States, when States they were not, but outcrying and petitioning provinces; they fou't and they fou't, and what marvellous boastings did they give forth to the world of their own valour and victories, while both parties forgot to name the humble soldier of the land, who did the real service; but who, as

he was not privileged then to smoke at the great council fire of his nation, seldom heard of his deeds, after they were once bravely done."

When the old man had thus given vent to the nearly dormant, but far from extinct, military pride, that had so unconsciously led him into the very error he deprecated, his eye, which had begun to quicken and glimmer with some of the ardour of his youth, softened, and turned its anxious look on the devoted captive, whose countenance was also restored to its former cold look of abstraction and thought.

"Young warrior," he continued, in a voice that was growing tremulous, "I have never been father or brother. The Wahcondah made me to live alone. He never tied my heart to house or field, by the cords with which the men of my race are bound to their lodges; if he had, I should not have journeyed so far, and seen so much. But I have

tarried long among a people who lived in those woods you mention: and much reason did I find to imitate their courage and love their honesty. The Master of Life has made us all, Pawnee, with a feeling for our kind. I never was a father, but well do I know what is the love of one. You are like a lad I valued, and I had even began to fancy that some of his blood might be in your veins. But what matters that! You are a true man, as I know, by the way in which you keep your faith; and honesty is a gift too rare to be forgotten. My heart yearns to you, boy, and gladly would I do you good."

The youthful warrior listened to the words which came from the lips of the other, with a force and simplicity that established their truth; and he bowed his head on his naked bosom, in testimony of the respect with which he met the proffer. Then lifting his dark eye to the level of the view, he seemed to

be again considering of things removed from every personal consideration. The trapper, who well knew how high the pride of a warrior would sustain him in those moments he believed to be his last, awaited the pleasure of his young friend, with a meekness and patience that he had acquired by his association with that remarkable race. At length the gaze of the Pawnee began to waver; and then quick, flashing glances were turned from the countenance of the old man to the air, and from the air to his deeply marked lineaments again, as if the spirit which governed their movements was beginning to be troubled.

"Father," the young brave finally answered, in a voice of confidence and kindness; "I have heard your words. They have gone in at my ears, and are now within me. The white-headed Long-knife has no son; the Hard-Heart of the Pawnees is young, but he is already the oldest of his family. He

found the bones of his father on the hunting-ground of the Osages, and he has sent them to the prairies of the Good Spirits. No doubt the great chief, his father, has seen them, and knows what is part of himself. But the Wahcondah will soon call to us both; you, because you have seen all that is to be seen in this country, and Heard-Heart, because he has need of a warrior who is young. There is no time for the Pawnee to show the Pale-face, the duty that a son owes to his father."

"Old as I am, and miserable and helpless as I now stand, to what I once was, I may live to see the sun go down in the prairie. Does my son expect ever to see darkness come again?"

"The Tetons are counting the scalps on my lodge!" returned the young chief, with a smile, whose melancholy was singularly illuminated by a gleam of triumph

"And they find them many. Too many for the safety of its owner, while he is in their revengeful hands. My son is not a woman, and he looks on the path he is about to travel with a steady eye. Has he nothing to whisper in the ears of his people before he starts. These legs are old, but they may yet carry me to the forks of the Loup-river."

"Tell them that Hard-Heart has tied a knot in his wampum for every Teton!" burst from the lips of the captive, with that vehemence with which sudden passion is known to break through the barriers of artificial restraint. "If he meets one of them all in the prairies of the Master of Life, his heart will become Sioux!"

"Ah! that feeling would be a dangerous companion for a man with white gifts to start with on such a solemn journey," muttered the old man, in English. "This is not what the good Moravians said to the councils of the

Delawares, nor what is so often preached to the White-skins in the settlements, though to the shame of the colour be it said, it is so little heeded. Pawnee, I love you; but, being a Christian man, I cannot be the runner to bear such a message."

"If my father is afraid the Tetons will hear him, let him whisper it softly to our old men."

"As for fear, young warrior, it is no more the shame of a Pale-face than of a Red-skin. The Wahcondah teaches us to love the life he gives; but it is as men love their hunts, and their dogs, and their carabines, and not with the doting that a mother looks upon her infant. The Master of Life will not have to speak aloud twice when he calls my name. I am as ready to answer to it now as I shall be to-morrow, or at any time it may please His mighty will. But what is a warrior without his traditions! Mine forbid me to carry your words."

The chief made a dignified motion of assent, and here there was great danger that those feelings of confidence, which had been so singularly awakened, would as suddenly subside. But the heart of the old man had been too sensibly touched, through long dormant but still living recollections, to break off the communication so rudely. He pondered for a minute, and then bending his look wistfully on his young associate, again continued—

"Each warrior must be judged by his gifts. I have told my son what I cannot, but let him open his ears to what I can do. An elk shall not measure the prairie much swifter than these old legs, if the Pawnee will give me a message that a white man may bear."

"Let the Pale-face listen;" returned the other, after hesitating a single instant longer, under a lingering sensation of his former disappointment; "he will stay here till the Siouxes have done

counting the scalps of their dead warriors; he will wait until they have tried to cover the heads of eighteen Tetons with the skin of one Pawnee; he will open his eyes wide, that he may see the place where they bury the bones of a warrior."

"All this will I and may I do, noble boy."

"He will mark the spot that he may know it."

"No fear, no fear that I shall forget the place," interrupted the other, whose fortitude began to give way under so trying an exhibition of calmness and resignation.

"Then I know that my father will go to my people. His head is gray and his words will not be blown away with the smoke. Let him get on my lodge, and call the name of Hard-Heart aloud. No Pawnee will be deaf. Then let my father ask for the colt, that has never

been ridden, but which is sleeker than the buck, and swifter than the elk."

"I understand you, boy, I understand you," interrupted the attentive old man; "and what you say shall be done, ay, and well done, too, or I'm but little skilled in the wishes of a dying Indian."

"And when my young men have given my father the halter of that colt, he will lead him by a crooked path to the grave of Hard-Heart?"

"Will I! ay, that I will, my brave youth, though the winter covers these plains in banks of snow, and the sun is hidden as much by day as by night. To the head of the holy spot will I lead the beast, and place him with his eyes looking towards the setting sun."

"And my father will speak to him, and tell him, that the master who has fed him since he was foaled, has now need of him."

"That, too, will I do; though the

Lord he knows that I shall hold discourse with a horse, not with any vain conceit that my words will be understood, but only to satisfy the cravings of Indian superstition. Hector, my pup, what think *you*, dog, of talking to a horse?"

"Let the grey-beard speak to him with the tongue of a Pawnee," interrupted the young victim, perceiving that his companion had used an unknown language for the preceding speech.

"My son's will shall be done; and with these old hands, which I had hoped had nearly done with bloodshed, whether it be of man or beast, will I slay the animal on your grave!"

"It is good," returned the other, a gleam of satisfaction flitting across his grave and composed features. "Hard-Heart will ride his horse to the blessed prairies, and he will come before the Master of Life like a chief!"

The sudden and striking change which instantly occurred in the coun-

tenance of the Indian, caused the trapper to look aside, when he perceived that the conference of the Siouxes had ended, and that Mahtoree, attended by one or two of the principal warriors, was deliberately approaching his intended victim.

CHAPTER III.

I am not prone to weeping, as our sex
Commonly are.—
—But I have that honourable
Grief lodged here, which burns worse than
Tears drown.

SHAKSPEARE.

WHEN within twenty feet of the prisoners, the Tetons stopped, and their leader made a sign to the old man to draw nigh. The trapper obeyed, quitting the young Pawnee with a significant look, which was received, as it was meant, for an additional pledge that he would never forget his promise. So soon as Mahtoree found that the other had stopped within reach of him, he stretched forth his arm, and laying a hand upon the shoulder of the attentive old man, he stood regarding him, a

minute, with eyes that seemed willing to penetrate the recesses of his most secret thoughts.

"Is a Pale-face made with two tongues?" he demanded, when he found that, as usual, with the subject of this examination, he was as little intimidated by his present frown as moved by any apprehensions of the future.

"Honesty lies deeper than the skin."

"It is so. Now let my father hear me. Mahtoree has but one tongue, the gray head has many. They may be all straight, and none of them forked. A Sioux is no more than a Sioux, but a Pale-face is every thing! He can talk to the Pawnee, and the Konza, and the Omawhaw, and he can talk to his own people."

"Ay, there are linguisters in the settlements, that can do still more. But what profits it all? The Master of Life has an ear for every language!"

"The gray-head has done wrong.

He has said one thing when he meant another. He has looked before him with his eyes, and behind him with his mind. He has ridden the horse of a Sioux too hard; he has been the friend of a Pawnee, and the enemy of my people."

"Teton, I am your prisoner. Though my words are white, they will not complain. Act your will."

"No: Mahtoree will not make a white hair red. My father is free. The prairie is open on every side of him. But before the grey-head turns his back on the Siouxes, let him look well at them, that he may tell his own chief how great is a Dahcotah!"

"I am not in a hurry to go on my path. You see a man with a white head, and no woman, Teton; therefore shall I not run myself out of breath, to tell the nations of the prairies what the Siouxes are doing."

"It is good. My father has smoked

with the chiefs at many councils," returned Mahtoree, who now thought himself sufficiently sure of the other's favour to go more directly to his object. "Mahtoree will speak with the tongue of his very dear friend and father. A young Pale-face will listen when an old man of that nation opens his mouth. Go, my father will make what a poor Indian says fit for a white ear."

"Speak aloud!" said the trapper, who readily understood the metaphorical manner in which the Teton expressed a desire that he should become an interpreter of his words into the English language; "speak, my young men listen. Now, captain, and you too, friend bee-hunter, prepare yourselves to meet the deviltries of this savage with the stout hearts of white warriors. If you find yourselves giving way under his threats, just turn your eyes on that noble looking Pawnee, whose time is measured with a hand as

niggardly, as that with which a trader in the towns gives forth the fruits of the Lord inch by inch, in order to satisfy his covetousness. A single look at the boy will set you both up in resolution."

"My brother has turned his eyes on the wrong path," interrupted Mahtoree, with a complacency that betrayed how unwilling he was to offend his intended interpreter.

"The Dahcotah will speak to my young men?"

"After he has sung in the ear of the flower of the Pale-faces."

"The Lord forgive the desperate villain!" exclaimed the old man in English. "There are none so tender, or so young, or so innocent, as to escape his ravenous wishes. But hard words and cold looks will profit nothing; therefore it will be wise to speak him fair. Let Mahtoree open his mouth."

"Would my father cry out, that the women and children should hear the

wisdom of chiefs? We will go into the lodge and whisper."

As the Teton ended, he pointed significantly towards a tent, vividly emblazoned with the history of one of his own boldest and most commended exploits, and which stood a little apart from the rest, as if to denote it was the residence of some privileged individual of the band. The shield and quiver at its entrance were richer than common, and the high distinction of a fusee, unequivocally attested the importance of its proprietor. In every other particular it was rather distinguished by signs of poverty than of wealth. The domestic utensils were fewer in number and simpler in their forms, than those to be seen about the openings of the meanest lodges, nor was there a single one of those high-prized articles of civilized life, which were occasionally bought of the traders, in bargains that bore so hard on the ignorant natives. All these

had been bestowed, as they had been acquired, by the generous chief, on his subordinates, to purchase an influence that might render him the master of their lives and persons; a species of wealth that was certainly more noble in itself, and far dearer to his ambition.

The old man well knew this to be the lodge of Mahtoree, and in obedience to the sign of the chief, he held his way towards it with slow and reluctant steps. But there were others present, who were equally interested in the approaching conference, whose apprehensions were not to be so easily suppressed. The watchful eyes and jealous ears of Middleton had taught him enough to fill his soul with the most horrible forebodings. With an incredible effort he succeeded in gaining his feet, and called aloud to the retiring trapper—

"I conjure you, old man, if the love you bore my parents was more than words, or if the love you bear your God

is that of a Christian man, utter not a syllable that may wound the ear of that innocent—"

Exhausted in spirit, and fettered in limbs, he then fell, like an inanimate log, to the earth, where he lay as if perfectly dead.

Paul had, however, caught the clue and completed the exhortation, in his peculiar manner.

"Harkee, old trapper," he shouted, vainly endeavouring at the same time to make a gesture of defiance with his hand; "if you ar' about to play the interpreter, speak such words to the ears of that damnable savage, as becomes a white man to use and a heathen to hearken to. Tell him, from me, that if he does or says the thing that is uncivil to the girl called Nelly Wade, that I'll curse him with my dying breath; that I'll pray for all good Christians in Kentucky to curse him; sitting and standing; eating and drink-

ing; fighting, praying, or at horse-races; in-doors and out-doors; in summer or winter or in the month of March. In short, I'll—ay, it ar' a fact, morally true—I'll haunt him, if the ghost of a Pale-face can contrive to lift itself from a grave made by the hands of a Red-skin!"

Having thus vented the most terrible denunciation he could devise, and the one which, in the eyes of the honest bee-hunter, there seemed the greatest likelihood of his being able to put in execution, he was obliged to await the fruits of his threat, with all that calm resignation which would be apt to govern a western border-man who, in addition to the prospects just named, had the advantage of contemplating them in fetters and bondage. We shall not detain the narrative, to relate the quaint morals with which he next endeavoured to cheer the drooping spirits of his more sensitive companion,

or the occasional pithy and peculiar benedictions that he pronounced on all the bands of the Dahcotahs, commencing with those whom he accused of stealing or murdering, on the banks of the distant Mississipi, and concluding, in terms of suitable energy, with the Teton tribe. The latter more than once received from his lips curses as sententious and as complicated as that celebrated anathema of the church, for a knowledge of which most unlettered Protestants are indebted to the pious researches of the worthy Tristram Shandy. But as Middleton recovered from his exhaustion, he was fain to appease the boisterous temper of his associate by admonishing him of the uselessness of such denunciations, and of the possibility of their hastening the very evil he deprecated, by irritating the resentments of a race, who were sufficiently fierce and lawless even in their most pacific moods.

In the mean time the trapper and the Sioux chief had pursued their way to the lodge. The former had watched with painful interest the expression of Mahtoree's eye, while the words of Middleton and Paul were pursuing their footsteps; but the mien of the Indian was far too much restrained and self-guarded, to permit the smallest of his emotions to escape through any of those ordinary outlets, by which the condition of the human volcano is commonly betrayed. His look was fastened on the little tenement they approached; and, for the moment, his thoughts appeared to brood alone on the purposes of this extraordinary visit.

The appearance of the interior of the lodge corresponded with its exterior. It was larger than most of the others, more finished in its form, and finer in its materials; but there its superiority ceased. Nothing could be more simple and republican, than the form of

living that the ambitious and powerful Teton chose to exhibit to the eyes of his people. A choice collection of weapons for the chase, some three or four medals, bestowed by the traders and political agents of the Canadas, as a hommageto, or rather as an acknowledgment of his rank, with a few of the most indispensable articles of personal accommodation, composed its furniture. It abounded in neither venison nor the wild beef of the prairies; its crafty owner having well understood, that the liberality of a single individual would be abundantly rewarded by the daily contributions of a band. Although as pre-eminent in the chase as in war, a deer or a buffalo was never seen to enter whole into his lodge. In return an animal was rarely brought into the encampment, that did not contribute to support the family of Mahtoree. But the policy of the chief seldom permitted more to remain than

sufficed for the wants of the day, perfectly assured that all must suffer, before hunger, the bane of savage life, could lay its fell pangs on so important a victim.

Immediately beneath the favourite bow of the chief, and encircled in a sort of magical ring of spears, shields, lances and arrows, all of which had in their time done good service, was suspended the mysterious and sacred medicine-bag. It was highly wrought in wampum, and profusely ornamented with beads and porcupines' quills, after the most cunning devices of Indian ingenuity. The peculiar freedom of Mahtoree's religious creed, has been more than once intimated; and by a singular species of contradiction, he appeared to have lavished his attentions on this emblem of a supernatural agency, in a degree that was precisely inverse to his faith. It was merely the manner, in which the Sioux imitated the well-known

expedient of the Pharisee, "in order that they might be seen of men."

The tent had not, however, been entered by its owner, since his return from the recent expedition. As the reader has already anticipated, it had been made the prison of Inez and Ellen. The bride of Middleton was seated on a simple couch of sweet-scented herbs covered with skins. She had already suffered so much,and witnessed so many wild and unlooked-for events, within the short space of her captivity, that every additional misfortune fell with a diminished force on her seemingly devoted head. Her cheeks were bloodless, her dark and usually animated eye was contracted in an expression of settled concern, and her form appeared shrinking and sensitive, nearly to extinction. But in the midst of these evidences of natural weakness, there were at times, such an air of pious resignation, such gleams of meek but holy hope light-

ing her countenance, as might well have rendered it a question, whether the hapless captive was most a subject of pity or of admiration. All the precepts of father Ignatius were riveted in her fathful memory; and not a few of his pious visions were floating before her heated imagination. Sustained by such sacred resolutions, the mild, the patient, and the confiding girl, was bowing her head to this new stroke of Providence, with the same sort of meekness as she would have submitted to any other prescribed penitence for her sins, though nature, at moments, warred powerfully with so compelled a humility.

On the other hand, Ellen had exhibited far more of the woman, and consequently of the passions of the world. She had wept until her eyes were swollen and red. Her cheeks were flushed and angry, and her whole mien was distinguished by an air of spirit and resentment, that was not a

little, however, qualified by apprehensions for the future. In short, there was that about the eye and step of the betrothed of Paul, which gave a warranty that should happier times arrive, and the constancy of the bee-hunter finally meet with its reward, he would possess a partner every way worthy to cope with his own thoughtless and buoyant temperament.

There was still another and a third figure in that little knot of females. It was the youngest, the most highly gifted, and, until now, the most favoured of the wives of the Teton. Her charms had not been without the most powerful attraction, in the eyes of her husband, until they had so unexpectedly opened on the surpassing loveliness of a woman of the Pale-faces. From that hapless moment, the graces, the attachment, the fidelity of the young Indian, had lost their power to please. Still the complexion of Tachechana,

though less dazzling than that of her rival, was, for her race, clear and healthy. Her hazle eye had the sweetness and playfulness of the antelope's; her voice was soft and joyous as the song of the wren, and her happy laugh was the very melody of the forest. Of all the Sioux girls, Tachechana (the Fawn) was the lightest-hearted and the most envied. Her father had been a distinguished brave, and her brothers had already left their bones on a distant and dreary war-path. Numberless were the warriors, who had sent presents to the lodge of her parents; but none of them were listened to, until a messenger from the Great Mahtoree had come. She was his third wife, it is true, but she was confessedly the most favoured of them all. Their union had existed but two short seasons, and its fruits now lay sleeping at her feet, wrapped in the customary ligatures of skin and

bark, which form the swaddlings of an Indian infant.

At the moment when Mahtoree and the trapper arrived at the opening of the lodge, the young Sioux wife was seated on a simple stool, turning her soft eyes, with looks that varied like her emotions with love and wonder, from the unconscious child, to those rare beings who had filled her youthful and uninstructed mind, with so much admiration and astonishment. Though Inez and Ellen had passed an entire day in her sight, it seemed as if the longings of her curiosity were increasing with each new gaze. She regarded them as beings of entirely a different nature and condition from the females of the prairie. Even the mystery of their complicated attire had its sacred influence on her simple mind, though it was the grace and charms of sex, to which nature has made every

people so sensible, that most attracted her admiration. But while her ingenuous disposition freely admitted the superiority of the strangers over the less brilliant attractions of the Dahcotah maidens, she had seen no reason to deprecate their advantages. The visit that she was now about to receive, was the first which her husband had made to the tent, since his return from the recent inroad; and he was ever present to her thoughts, as a successful warrior, who was not ashamed, in the moments of inaction, to admit the softer feelings of a father and a husband.

We have every where endeavoured to show, that while Mahtoree was in all essentials a warrior of the prairies, he was much in advance of his people, in those acquirements which announce the dawnings of civilization. He had held frequent communion with the traders and troops of the Canadas, and the intercourse had unsettled many of

those wild opinions, which were his birth-right; without perhaps substituting any others, of a nature sufficiently definite to be profitable. His reasoning was rather subtle than true, and his philosophy far more audacious than profound. Like thousands of more enlightened beings, who fancy they are able to go through the trials of human existence, without any other support than their own resolutions, his morals were accommodating and his motives selfishness. These several characteristics will be understood always with reference to the situation of the Indian, though little apology is needed for finding resemblances between men, who essentially possess the same nature, however it may be modified by circumstances.

Notwithstanding the presence of Inez and Ellen, the entrance of the Teton warrior, into the lodge of his favourite wife, was made with the tread and

mien of a master. The step of his mocassin was noiseless, but the rattling of his bracelets, and of the silver ornaments of his leggings, sufficed to announce his approach, as he pushed aside the skin covering of the opening of the tent, and stood in the presence of its inmates. A faint cry of pleasure burst from the lips of Tachechana in the suddenness of her surprise, but the emotion was instantly suppressed in that subdued demeanor, which should characterise a matron of her tribe. Instead of returning the stolen glance of his youthful and secretly rejoicing wife, Mahtoree moved to the couch occupied by his prisoners, and placed himself in the haughty, upright attitude of an Indian chief, before their eyes. The old man had glided past him, and already taken a position suited to the office he had been commanded to fill.

Surprise kept the females for a moment silent and nearly breathless.

Though accustomed to the sight of savage warriors, in all the horrid panoply of their terrible profession, there was something so startling in the entrance, and so audacious in the inexplicable look of their conqueror, that the eyes of both sunk to the earth, under a feeling of terror, and perhaps of embarrassment. Then Inez recovered herself, and addressing the trapper, she demanded, with the dignity of an offended gentlewoman, though with her accustomed grace, to what circumstance they owed this extraordinary and unexpected visit. The old man hesitated; but clearing his throat, like one who was about to make an effort to which he was little used, he ventured on the following reply—

"Lady," he said, "a savage is a savage, and you are not to look for the uses and formalities of the settlements on a bleak and windy prairie. As these Indians would say, fashions and

courtesies are things so light, that they would blow away. As for myself, though a man of the forest, I have seen the ways of the great in my time, and I am not to learn that they differ from the ways of the lowly. I was long a serving-man in my youth, not one of your beck-and-nod runners about a household, but a man that went through the servitude of the forest with his officer, and well do I know in what manner to approach the wife of a captain. Now had I the ordering of this visit, I would first have hemmed aloud at the door, in order that you might hear that strangers were coming, and then I—"

"The manner is indifferent," interrupted Inez, too anxious to await the prolix explanations of the old man; "why is the visit made?"

"Therein shall the savage speak for himself.—The daughters of the Pale-

faces wish to know why the Great Teton has come into his lodge?"

Mahtoree regarded his interrogator with a surprise, which showed how extraordinary he deemed the question. Then placing himself in a posture of condescension, after a moment's delay, he answered—

"Sing in the ears of the dark-eye. Tell her the lodge of Mahtoree is very large, and that it is not full. She shall find room in it, and none shall be greater than she. Tell the light-hair, that she too may stay in the lodge of a brave, and eat of his venison. Mahtoree is a great chief. His hand is never shut."

"Teton," returned the trapper, shaking his head in evidence of the strong disapprobation with which he heard this language, "the tongue of a Red-skin must be coloured white before it can make music in the ears of a Pale-face.

Should your words be spoken, my daughters would shut their ears, and Mahtoree would seem a trader to their eyes. Now listen to what comes from a gray head, and then speak accordingly. My people is a mighty people. The sun rises on their eastern and sets on their western border. The land is filled with bright-eyed and laughing girls like these you see—ay, Teton, I tell no lie," observing his auditor to start with an air of distrust—"bright-eyed and pleasant to behold, as these before you."

"Has my father a hundred wives?" interrupted the savage, laying his finger on the shoulder of the trapper, with a look of curious interest in the reply.

"No, Dahcotah. The Master of Life has said to me, live alone; your lodge shall be the forest; the roof of your wigwam, the clouds. But though never bound in the secret faith which, in my nation, ties one man to one woman,

often have I seen the workings of that kindness which brings the two together. Go into the regions of my people; you will see the daughters of the land, fluttering through the towns like many-coloured and joyful birds, in the season of blossoms. You will meet them, singing and rejoicing, along the great paths of the country, and you will hear the woods ringing with their laughter. They are very excellent to behold, and the young men find pleasure in looking at them."

"Hugh!" ejaculated the attentive Mahtoree.

"Ay, well may you put faith in what you hear, for it is no lie. But when a youth has found a maiden to please him, he speaks to her in a voice so soft, that none else can hear. He does not say, my lodge is empty, and there is room for another; but shall I build, and will the virgin show me near what spring she would dwell? His voice is

sweeter than honey from the locust, and goes into the ear thrilling like the song of a wren. Therefore, if my brother wishes his words to be heard, he must speak with a white tongue."

Mahtoree pondered deeply, and in a wonder that he did not attempt to conceal. It was reversing all the order of society, and according to his established opinions, endangering the dignity of a chief, for a warrior thus to humble himself before a woman. But as Inez sat before him, reserved and imposing in air, utterly unconscious of his object, and least of all suspecting the true purport of so extraordinary a visit, the savage felt the influence of a manner to which he was unaccustomed. Bowing his head, as if in acknowledgment of his error, he stepped a little back, and placing himself in an attitude of easy dignity, he began to speak with the confidence of one who had been no less distinguished for his eloquence than for

his deeds in arms. Keeping his eyes riveted on the unconscious bride of Middleton, he proceeded in the following words.

"I am a man with a red skin, but my eyes are dark. They have been open since many snows. They have seen many things—they know a brave from a coward. When a boy, I saw nothing but the bison and the deer. I went to the hunts, and I saw the cougar and the bear. This made Mahtoree a man. He talked with his mother no more. His ears were open to the wisdom of the old men. They told him every thing—they told him of the Big-knives. He went on the war-path. He was then the last; now, he is the first. What Dahcotah dare say he will go before Mahtoree into the hunting-grounds of the Pawnees! The chiefs met him at their doors, and they said, my son is without a home. They gave him their lodges, they gave him their

riches, and they gave him their daughters. Then Mahtoree became a chief, as his fathers had been. He struck the warriors of all the nations, and he could have chosen wives from the Pawnees, the Omawhaws, and the Konzas; but he looked at the hunting-grounds, and not at his village. He thought a horse was pleasanter than a Dahcotah girl. But he found a flower on the prairies, and he plucked it and brought it into his lodge. He forgets that he is the master of a single horse. He gives them all to the stranger, for Mahtoree is not a thief; he will only keep the flower he found on the prairie. Her feet are very tender; she cannot walk to the door of her father; she will stay in the lodge of a warrior for ever."

When he had finished this extraordinary address, the Teton awaited to have it translated, with the air of a suitor who entertained no very disheartening doubts of his success. The trapper had not

lost a syllable of the speech, and he now prepared himself to render it into English, in such a manner as should leave its principal idea even more obscure than in the original. But as his reluctant lips were in the act of parting, Ellen lifted a finger, and with a keen glance from her quick eye, at the still attentive Inez, she interrupted him—

"Spare your breath," she said; "all that a savage says, is not to be repeated before a Christian lady."

Inez started, blushed, and bowed, with an air of reserve, as she coldly thanked the old man for his intentions, and observed, that she could now wish to be alone.

"My daughters have no need of ears to understand what a great Dahcotah says," returned the trapper, addressing himself to the expecting Mahtoree. "The look he has given, and the signs he has made, are enough. They understand him; they wish to think of his words; for the child-

ren of great braves, such as their fathers are, do nothing without much thought."

With this explanation, so flattering to the energy of his eloquence, and so promising to his future hopes, the Teton was every way content. He made the customary ejaculation of assent, and prepared to retire. Saluting the females, in the cold but dignified manner of his people, he drew his robe about him, and moved from the spot where he had stood, with an air of ill-concealed triumph.

But there had been a stricken, though a motionless and unobserved auditor of the foregoing scene. Not a syllable had fallen from the lips of the long and anxiously expected husband, that had not gone directly to the heart of his unoffending wife. In this manner had he wooed her from the lodge of her father: and it was to listen to similar pictures of the renown and deeds of the greatest brave in her tribe, that she had shut her

ears to the tender tales of so many of the Sioux youths.

As the Teton turned to leave his lodge, in the manner just mentioned, he found this unexpected and half-forgotten object before him. She stood in the humble guise, and with the shrinking air of an Indian girl, holding the pledge of their former loves in her arms, directly in his path. Starting for a single instant, the chief regained the marble-like indifference of countenance, which distinguished in so remarkable a degree the restrained or more artificial expression of his features, and signed to her, with an air of authority, to give place.

"Is not Tachechana the daughter of a chief?" demanded a subdued voice, in which pride struggled fearfully with anguish. "Were not her brothers braves?"

"Go; the men are calling their partisan. He has no ears for a woman."

"No," replied the supplicant; "it is

not the voice of Tachechana that you hear, but this boy, speaking with the tongue of his mother. He is the son of a chief, and his words will go up to his father's ears. Listen to what he says. When was Mahtoree hungry, and Tachechana had not food for him? When did he go on the path of the Pawnees and find it empty, that my mother did not weep? When did he come back with the marks of their blows, that she did not sing? What Sioux girl has given a brave a son like me! Look at me well, that you may know me. My eyes are the eagle's; I look at the sun, and laugh. In a little time the Dahcotahs will follow me to the hunts and on the war-path. Why does my father turn his eyes from the woman that gives me milk? Why has he so soon forgotten the daughter of a mighty Sioux?"

There was a single instant, as the exulting father suffered his cold eye to wander to the face of the laughing boy,

that the stern nature of the Teton seemed touched. But shaking off the grateful sentiment, like one who would gladly be rid of any painful, because reproachful, emotion, he laid his hand calmly on the arm of his wife, and led her directly in front of Inez. Pointing to the sweet countenance that was beaming on her own, with a look of tenderness and commiseration, he paused, to allow his wife to contemplate a loveliness, which was quite as excellent to her ingenuous mind as it had proved dangerous to the character of her faithless husband. When he thought abundant time had passed to make the contrast sufficiently striking, he suddenly raised a small mirror, that dangled at her breast, an ornament he had himself bestowed in an hour of fondness, as a compliment to her beauty, and placed her own dark image in its place. Wrapping his robe again about him, the Teton motioned to the trapper

to follow, and stalked haughtily from the lodge, muttering as he went—

"Mahtoree is very wise! What nation has so great a chief as the Dahcotahs?"

Tachechana stood for a minute, as if frozen into a statue of humility. Her mild and usually joyous countenance worked, as though the struggle within was about to dissolve the connection between her soul and that more material part whose deformity was becoming so loathsome. Inez and Ellen were utterly ignorant of the nature of her interview with her husband: though the quick and sharpened wits of the latter, led her to suspect a truth, to which the entire innocence of the former furnished no clue. They were both, however, about to tender those sympathies, which are so natural to, and so graceful in the sex, when their necessity seemed suddenly to cease. The convulsions in the features of the young Sioux disappeared,

and her countenance became cold and rigid, like chiselled stone. A single expression of subdued anguish, which had made its impression on a brow that had rarely before contracted with sorrow, alone remained. It was never removed, in all the changes of seasons, fortunes, and years, which in the vicissitudes of a suffering female savage life, she was subsequently doomed to endure. As in the case of a premature blight, let the plant quicken and revive as it may, the effects of that withering touch were always present.

Tachechana first stripped her person of every vestige of those rude but highly prized ornaments, which the liberality of her husband had been wont to lavish on her, and she tendered them meekly, and without a murmur, as an offering to the superiority of Inez. The bracelets were forced from her wrists, the complicated mazes of beads from her leggings, and the broad silver band from

her brow. Then she paused, long and painfully. But it would seem, that the resolution she had once adopted, was not to be conquered by the lingering emotions of any affection, however natural. The boy himself was next laid at the feet of her supposed rival, and well might the self-abased wife of the Teton believe that the burthen of her sacrifice was now full.

While Inez and Ellen stood regarding these several strange movements with eyes of wonder, a low, soft, musical voice was heard, saying, in a language that to them was unintelligible—

"A strange tongue will tell my boy the manner to become a man. He will hear sounds that are new; but he will learn them, and forget the voice of his mother. It is the will of the Wahcondah, and a Sioux girl should not complain. Speak to him softly, for his ears are very little; when he is big, your words may be louder. Let him not

be a girl, for very sad is the life of a woman. Teach him to keep his eyes on the men. Show him how to strike them that do him wrong, and let him never forget to return blow for blow. When he goes to hunt, the flower of the Pale-faces," she concluded, using in bitterness the metaphor which had been supplied by the imagination of her truant husband, "will whisper softly in his ears, that the skin of his mother was red, and that she was once the Fawn of the Dahcotahs."

Tachechana pressed a kiss on the lips of her son, and then withdrew to the farther side of the lodge. Here she drew her light calico robe over her head, and took her seat, in token of her humility, on the naked earth. All the efforts of her companions, to attract her attention, were fruitless. She neither heard their remonstrances, nor felt their gentle touch. Once or twice her voice rose in a sort of wailing song, from be-

neath her quivering mantle, but it never mounted into the full wildness of savage music. In this manner she remained unseen for hours, while events were occurring without the lodge, which not only materially changed the complexion of her own fortunes, but left a lasting and deep impression on the future movements of the wandering Sioux tribe.

CHAPTER IV.

I'll no swaggerers; I am in good name and fame with the very best:—Shut the door;—There come no swaggerers here; I have not lived all this while, to have swaggering now;—shut the door I pray you.

SHAKSPEARE.

MAHTOREE encountered, at the door of his lodge, the persons of Ishmael, Abiram, and Esther. The first glance of his eye, at the earnest and threatening countenance of the heavy-moulded squatter, served to tell the cunning Teton, that the treacherous truce he had made, with these dupes of his superior sagacity, was in some danger of a violent termination.

"Look you here, old gray beard," said Ishmael, seizing the trapper, and whirling him round, as though he had

been a toy; "that I'm tired of carrying on a discourse with fingers and thumbs, instead of a tongue, ar' a natural fact; so you'll play linguister, and put my words into up-and-down Indian, without much caring whether they suit the stomach of a Red-skin or not."

"Say on, friend," calmly returned the trapper; "they shall be given as plainly as you send them."

"Friend!" repeated the squatter, eyeing the other for an instant, with an expression of an indefinable meaning. "But it is no more than a word, and sounds break no bones and survey no farms. Tell this thieving Sioux, then, that I come to claim the conditions of our solemn bargain, made at the foot of the rock."

When the trapper had rendered his meaning into the Sioux language, Mahtoree demanded, with an air of surprise—

"Is my brother cold? Buffalo skins

are plenty. Is he hungry? Let my young men carry venison into his lodges."

The squatter elevated his clenched fist, in a menacing manner, and struck it with violence on the palm of his open hand, by way of confirming his determination, as he answered—

"Tell the deceitful liar, I have not come, like a beggar, to pick his bones, but like a freeman asking for his own; and have it I will. And, moreover, tell him I claim that you, too, miserable sinner as you ar', should be given up to justice. There's no mistake. My prisoner, my niece, and you. I demand the three at his hands, according to a sworn agreement."

The immoveable old man smiled, with an expression of singular intelligence, as he answered—

"Friend squatter, you ask what few men would be willing to grant. You

would first cut the tongue from the mouth of the Teton, and then the heart from his bosom."

"It is little that Ishmael Bush regards who or what is damaged in claiming his own. But put you the questions in straight-going Indian; and when you speak of yourself, make such a sign as a white man will understand, in order that I may know there is no foul play."

The trapper laughed, in his silent fashion, and muttered a few words to himself before he addressed the chief—

"Let the Dahcotah open his ears very wide," he then said, "that big words may have room to enter. His friend, the Big-knife, comes with an empty hand, and he says that the Teton must fill it."

"Wagh! Mahtoree is a rich chief. He is master of the prairies."

"He must give the dark hair."

The brow of the chief contracted in an ominous frown, that threatened

instant destruction to the audacious squatter; but as suddenly recollecting his policy, he craftily replied, with a treacherous smile—

"A girl is too light for the hand of such a brave. I will fill it with buffalos."

"He says he has need of the light-hair too; who has his blood in her veins."

"She shall be the wife of Mahtoree; then the Long-knife will be the father of a chief."

"And me," continued the trapper, making one of those expressive signs, by which the natives communicate with nearly the same facility as with their tongues, and turning to the squatter at the same time, in order that the latter might see he dealt fairly by him; "he asks for a miserable and worn out trapper."

The Dahcotah threw his arm over the shoulder of the old man, with an air of great affection, before he replied to this third and last demand.

"My friend is old," he said, "and cannot travel far. He will stay with the Tetons, that they may learn wisdom from his words. What Sioux has a tongue like my father! No, let his words be very soft, but let them be very clear. Mahtoree will give skins and buffalos. He will give the young men of the Pale-faces wives, but he cannot give away any who live in his own lodge."

Perfectly satisfied himself with this laconic reply, the chief was moving towards his expecting counsellors, when suddenly returning, he interrupted the translation of the trapper by adding—

"Tell the Great Buffalo" (a name by which the Tetons had already christened Ishmael), "that Mahtoree has a hand which is always open. See," he added, pointing to the hard and wrinkled visage of the attentive Esther, "his wife is too old for so great a chief. Let him put her out of his lodge. Mah-

toree loves him as a brother. He *is* his brother. He shall have the youngest wife of the Teton. Tachechana, the pride of the Sioux girls, shall cook his venison, and many braves will look at him with longing minds. Go, a Dahcotah is generous."

The singular coolness with which the Teton concluded this audacious proposal, confounded even the practised trapper. He stared after the retiring form of the Indian, with an astonishment he did not care to conceal; nor did he renew his attempt at interpretation, until the person of Mahtoree was blended with the cluster of warriors who had so long, and with so characteristic a patience, awaited his return.

"The Teton chief has spoken very plainly," the old man then continued; "he will not give you the lady, to whom the Lord in Heaven he knows you have no claim, unless it be such as the wolf has to the lamb. He will not give

you the child you call your niece; and therein I acknowledge that I am far from certain he has the same justice on his side. Moreover, neighbour squatter, he flatly denies your demand for me, miserable and worthless as I am; nor do I think he has been unwise in so doing, seeing that I should have many particular reasons against journeying far in your company. But he makes you an offer, which it is right and convenient you should know. The Teton says, through me, who am no more than a mouth-piece, and therein not answerable for the sin of his words; but he says, as this good woman is getting past the comely age, it is reasonable for you to tire of such a wife. He therefore tells you to turn her out of your lodge, and when it is empty he will send his own favourite, or rather she that was his favourite, the "Skipping Fawn," as the Siouxes call her, to fill her place. You see, neighbour, though the Red-skin is

so minded as to keep your property, he is willing to give you wherewithal to make yourself some return."

Ishmael listened to these replies to his several demands, with that species of gathering indignation, with which the dullest tempers mount into the most violent paroxysms of rage. He even affected to laugh at the conceit of exchanging his long-tried Esther for the more flexible support of the youthful Tachechana, though his voice was hollow and unnatural in the effort. But Esther was far from giving the proposal so facetious a reception. Lifting her voice to its peculiarly audible key, she broke forth, after catching her breath, like one who had been in some imminent danger of strangulation, as follows—

"Hoity-toity; who set an Indian up for a maker and breaker of the rights of wedded wives? Does he think a woman is a beast of the prairie, that

she is to be chased from a village by dog and gun. Let the bravest squaw of them all come forth and boast of her doings; can she show such a brood as mine. A wicked tyrant is that thieving Red-skin, and a bold rogue I warrant me. He would be captain in doors as well as out! An honest woman is no better in his eyes than one of your broom-stick jumpers. And you, Ishmael Bush, the father of seven sons and so many comely daughters, to open *your* sinful mouth, except to curse him! Would ye disgrace colour, and family, and nation, by mixing white blood with red, and would ye be the parent of a race of mules? The devil has often tempted you, my man, but never before has he set so cunning a snare as this. Go back among your children, friend: go, and remember that you are not a prowling bear, but a Christian man, and thank God that you ar' a lawful husband!"

The clamour of Esther was anticipated by the judicious trapper. He had easily foreseen that her meek temper would overflow at so scandalous a proposal as repudiation; and he now profitted by the tempest, to retire to a place where he was at least safe from any immediate violence on the part of her less excited, but certainly more dangerous husband. Ishmael, who had made his demands with a stout determination to enforce them, was diverted by the windy torrent, like many a more obstinate husband, from his purpose: and in order to appease a jealousy, that resembled the fury with which the bear defends her cubs, was fain to retire to a distance from the lodge, that was known to contain the unoffending object of the sudden uproar.

"Let your copper-coloured minx come forth, and show her tawny beauty before the face of a woman who has heard more than one church bell, and

seen a power of real quality," cried Esther, flourishing her hand in triumph, as she drove Ishmael and Abiram before her, like two truant boys, towards their own encampment. "I warrant me, I warrant me, here is one who would shortly talk her down! Never think to tarry here, my men; never think to shut an eye in a camp, through which the devil walks as openly as if he were a gentleman, and was sure of his welcome. Here, you Abner, Enoch, Jesse, where ar' ye gotten to? Put to, put to; if that weak-minded, soft feeling man, your father, eats or drinks again in this neighbourhood, we shall see him poisoned with the craft of the Red-skins. Not that I care, I, who comes into my place; when it is once lawfully empty; but Ishmael, I never thought that you, who have had one woman with a white skin, would find pleasure in looking on a brazen—ay, that she is copper ar' a fact;

you can't deny it, and I warrant me, brazen enough is she too!"

Against this ebullition of wounded female pride, the experienced husband made no other head, than by an occasional exclamation, which he intended to be the precursor of a simple asseveration of his own innocence. The fury of the woman would not be appeased. She listened to nothing but her own voice, and consequently nothing was heard but her mandates to depart.

The squatter had collected his beasts and loaded his waggons, as a measure of precaution, before proceeding to the extremity he had contemplated. Esther consequently found every thing favourable to her wishes. The young men stared at each other, as they witnessed the extraordinary excitement of their mother, but took little interest in an event which, in the course of their experience, had found so many parallels.

By command of their father, the tents also were quickly thrown into the vehicles, as a sort of reprisal for the want of faith in their late ally, and then the train left the spot, in its usual listless and sluggish order.

As a formidable division of well armed borderers protected the rear of the retiring party, the Siouxes saw it depart without manifesting the smallest evidence of surprise or resentment. The savage, like the tiger, rarely makes his attack on an enemy who expects him; and if the warriors of the Tetons meditated any hostility, it was in the still and patient manner with which the feline beasts watch for the incautious moment in their victims, in order to ensure the blow. The councils of Mahtoree, however, on whom so much of the policy of his people depended, lay deep in the depository of his own thoughts. Perhaps he rejoiced in so easy a manner of getting rid of claims so trouble-

some; perhaps he awaited a fitting time to exhibit his power: or it even might be, that matters of so much greater importance were pressing on his mind, that it had not leisure to devote any of its faculties to an event of so much indifference.

But it would seem that while Ishmael made such a concession to the awakened feelings of Esther, he was far from so easily abandoning his original intentions. His train followed the course of the river for a mile, and then it came to a halt on the brow of the elevated land, and in a place which afforded the necessary facilities. Here he again pitched his tents, unharnessed his teams, sent his cattle on the bottom, and in short, made all the customary preparations to pass the night, with the same coolness and deliberation as though he had not just hurled an irritating defiance into the very teeth of his dangerous neighbours.

In the mean time the Tetons proceeded to the more regular business of the hour. A fierce and savage joy had existed in the camp, from the instant when it had been announced that their own chief was returning with the long-dreaded and hated partisan of their enemies. For many hours the crones of the tribe had been going from lodge to lodge, in order to stimulate the tempers of the warriors to such a pass as might leave little room for the considerations of mercy. To one they spoke of a son, whose scalp was drying in the smoke of a Pawnee lodge. To another, they enumerated his own scars, his disgraces, and defeats; with a third, they dwelt on his losses of skins and horses; and a fourth was reminded of vengeance, by a significant question, concerning some flagrant adventure, in which he was known to have been a sufferer.

By these means the men had been so far excited as to have assembled in the

manner already related, though it still remained a matter of doubt how far they intended to carry their revenge. A variety of opinions prevailed on the policy of executing their prisoners, and Mahtoree had suspended the discussions, in order to ascertain how far the measure might propitiate or retard his own particular views. Hitherto the consultations had merely been preliminary, with a view that each chief might discover the number of supporters his view of the agitated question would be likely to obtain, when the important subject should come before a more solemn council of the tribe. The moment for the latter had now arrived, and the preparations to assemble it, were made with a dignity and solemnity suited to the momentous interests of the occasion.

With a refinement in cruelty, that none but an Indian would have imagined, the place selected for this grave deliberation, was immediately about the post to

which the most important of its subjects was attached. Middleton and Paul were brought in their bonds, and laid at the feet of the Pawnee; and then the men began to take their places, according to their several claims to distinction. As warrior after warrior approached, he seated himself in the wide circle, with a mien as composed and thoughtful, as though his mind were actually in a condition to deal out justice, tempered, as it should be, with the heavenly quality of mercy. A place was reserved for three or four of the principal chiefs; and a few of the oldest of the women, as withered as age, exposure, hardships, and lives of savage passions could make them, thrust themselves in to the foremost circle, with a temerity, to which they were impelled by their insatiable desire for cruelty, and which nothing but their years, and their long tried fidelity to the nation, would have excused.

All but the chiefs already named were now in their places. These had delayed their appearance, in the vain hope that their own unanimity might smooth the way to that of their respective factions; for, notwithstanding the superior influence of Mahtoree, his power was to be maintained only by constant appeals to the opinions of his inferiors. As these important personages at length entered the circle in a body, their sullen looks and clouded brows, notwithstanding the time given to consultation, sufficiently proclaimed the discontent which reigned among them. The eye of Mahtoree was varying in its expression, from sudden gleams, that seemed to kindle with the burning impulses of his soul, to that cold and guarded steadiness, which was thought more peculiarly to become a chief in council. He took his seat, with the studied simplicity of a demagogue; though the keen and flashing glance, that he immediately threw

around the silent assembly, betrayed the more predominant temper of a tyrant.

When all were present, an aged warrior lighted the great pipe of his people, and blew the smoke towards the four quarters of the heavens. So soon as this propitiatory offering was made, he tendered it to Mahtoree, who, in affected humility, passed it to a gray-headed chief by his side. After the influence of the soothing weed had been courted by all, a grave silence succeeded, as if each was not only qualified to, but actually did, think more deeply on the matters before them. Then an old Indian arose, and spoke as follows—

"The eagle, at the falls of the endless river, was in its egg, many snows after my hand had struck a Pawnee. What my tongue says, my eyes have seen. Bohrecheena is very old. The hills have stood longer in their places than

he has been in his tribe, and the rivers were full and empty before he was born; but where is the Sioux that knows it besides himself? What he says, they will hear. If any of his words fall to the ground, they will pick them up and hold them to their ears. If any blow away in the wind, my young men, who are very nimble, will catch them. Now listen. Since water ran and trees grew, the Sioux has found the Pawnee on his war-path. As the cougar loves the antelope, the Dahcotah loves his enemy. When the wolf finds the fawn, does he lie down and sleep? When the panther sees the doe at the spring, does he shut his eyes? You know that he does not. He drinks, too, but it is of blood! A Sioux is a leaping panther, a Pawnee is a trembling deer. Let my children hear me. They will find my words good. I have spoken."

A deep guttural exclamation of assent

broke from the lips of all the partisans of Mahtoree, as they listened to this sanguinary advice from one who was certainly among the most aged men of the nation. That deeply seated love of vengeance, which formed so prominent a feature in their characters, was gratified by his metaphorical allusions; and the chief himself augured favourably of the success of his own schemes, by the number of supporters who mani fested themselves to be in favour of the councils of his friend. But still unanimity was far from prevailing. A long and decorous pause was suffered to succeed the words of the first speaker, in order that all might duly deliberate on their wisdom before another chief took on himself the office of refutation. The second orator, though past the prime of his days, was far less aged than the one who had preceded him. He felt the disadvantage of this circumstance, and endeavoured to counteract it, as far as

possible, by the excess of his humility.

"I am but an infant," he commenced, looking furtively around him, in order to detect how far his well-established character for prudence and courage contradicted his assertion; "I have lived with the woman, since my father has been a man. If my head is getting gray, it is not because I am old. Some of the snow which fell on it while I have been sleeping on the war-paths, has frozen there, and the hot sun, near the Osage villages, has not been strong enough to melt it." A low murmur was heard, expressive of admiration for those services to which he thus artfully alluded. The orator modestly waited for the feeling to subside a little, and then he continued, with increasing energy, as though secretly encouraged by their commendations. "But the eyes of a young brave are good. He can see very far. He is a lynx. Look at me

well. I will turn my back, that you may see both sides of me. Now do you know I am your friend, for you look on a part that a Pawnee never yet saw. Now look at my face; not in this seam, for there your eyes can never see into my spirit. It is only a hole cut by a Konza. But here is an opening made by the Wahcondah, through which you may look into the soul. What am I? A Dahcotah within and without. You know it. Therefore hear me. The blood of every creature on the prairie is red. Who can tell the spot where a Pawnee was struck, from the place where my young men took a bison? It is of the same colour. The Master of Life made them for each other. He made them alike. But will the grass grow green where a Pale-face is killed? My young men must not think *that* nation is so numerous it will not miss a warrior. They call them over often, and say, where are my sons? If they

miss one, they will send into the prairies to look for him. If they cannot find him, they will tell their runners to ask for him among the Siouxes. My brethren the Big-knives are not fools. There is a mighty medicine of their nation now among us; who can tell how loud is his voice, or how long is his arm?"

The speech of the orator, who was beginning to enter into his subject with a suitable degree of warmth, was cut short by the impatient Mahtoree, who suddenly arose and exclaimed, in a voice in which authority was mingled with contempt, and, at the close, with a keen tone of irony also—

"Let my young men lead the evil spirit of the Pale-faces to the council. My brother shall see his medicine face to face!"

A death-like and solemn stillness succeeded this extraordinary interruption. It not only involved a deep offence against the sacred courtesy of

debate, but the mandate was likely to brave the unknown power of one of those incomprehensible beings, whom few Indians were enlightened enough at that day to regard without reverence, or few hardy enough to oppose. The subordinates, however, obeyed, and Obed was led forth from a lodge, mounted on Asinus, with a ceremony and state which was certainly intended for derision, but which nevertheless was greatly enhanced by fear. As they entered the ring, Mahtoree, who had foreseen and had endeavoured to anticipate the influence of the Doctor, by bringing him into contempt, cast an eye around the assembly, in order to gather his success in the various dark visages by which he was encircled.

Truly, nature and art had combined to produce such an effect from the air and appointments of the naturalist, as might have made him the subject of wonder in any place. His head had

been industriously shaved after the most approved fashion of Sioux taste. A gallant scalp-lock, which would probably have been spared had the Doctor himself been consulted in the matter, was all that remained of an exuberant, and at that particular season of the year, far from uncomfortable head of hair. Thick coats of paint had been laid on the naked poll, and certain fanciful designs, in the same material, had even been extended into the neighbourhood of the eyes and mouth, lending to the naturally keen expression of the former a look of twinkling cunning, and to the dogmatism of the latter not a little of the grimness of necromancy. He had been despoiled of his upper garments, and in their stead, his body was sufficiently protected from the cold by a fantastically painted robe of dressed deer-skin. As if in mockery of his pursuit, sundry toads, frogs, lizards, butterflies, etc., all duly prepared to take their places at some future day in

his own private cabinet, were attached to the solitary lock on his head, to his ears, and to various other conspicuous parts of his person. If, in addition to the effect produced by these quaint auxiliaries to his costume, we add the portentous and troubled gleamings of doubt, which rendered his visage doubly austere, and proclaimed the misgivings of the worthy Obed's mind, as he beheld his personal dignity thus prostrated; and what was of far greater moment in his eyes, himself led forth, as he firmly believed, to be the victim of some heathenish sacrifice, the reader will find no difficulty in giving credit to the sensation of awe, that was excited by his appearance in a band already more than half-prepared to worship him as a powerful agent of the evil spirit.

Weucha led Asinus directly into the centre of the circle, and leaving them together (for the legs of the naturalist were attached to the beast in such a

manner, that the two animals might be said to be incorporated, and to form a new order), he withdrew to his proper place, gazing at the conjuror, as he retired, with a wonder and admiration, that was natural to the grovelling dulness of his mind.

The astonishment seemed mutual between the spectators and the subject of this strange exhibition. If the Tetons contemplated the mysterious attributes of the medicine with awe and fear, the Doctor gazed on every side of him, with a mixture of quite as many extraordinary emotions, in which the latter sensation, however, formed no inconsiderable ingredient. Every where his eyes, which just at that moment possessed a secret magnifying quality, seemed to rest on several dark, savage, and obdurate countenances at once, from none of which could he extract a solitary gleam of sympathy or commiseration. At length his wandering gaze

fell on the grave and decent features of the trapper, who, with Hector at his feet, stood in the edge of the circle, leaning on that rifle which he had been permitted, as an acknowledged friend, to resume, and apparently musing on the events that were likely to succeed a council that was marked by so many and such striking ceremonies.

"Venerable venator, or hunter, or trapper," said the utterly disconsolate Obed, "I rejoice greatly in meeting thee again. I fear that the precious time which had been allotted me, in order to complete a mighty labour, is drawing to a premature close: and I would gladly unburden my mind to one who. if not a pupil of science, has at least some of the knowledge which civilization imparts to its meanest subjects. Doubtless many and earnest enquiries will be made after my fate, by the learned societies of the world, and perhaps expeditions will be sent into

these regions to remove any doubts, which may arise on so important a subject. I esteem myself happy that a man who speaks the vernacular is present, to preserve the record of my end. You will say that, after a well-spent and glorious life, I died a martyr to science and a victim to mental darkness. As I expect to be particularly calm and abstracted in my last moments, if you add a few details concerning the fortitude and scholastic dignity with which I met my death, it may serve to encourage the future aspirants for similar honours, and assuredly give offence to no one. And now, friend trapper, as a duty I owe to human nature, I will conclude by demanding if all hope has deserted me, or if any means still exist by which so much valuable information may be rescued from the grasp of ignorance, and preserved to the pages of natural history."

The old man lent an attentive ear to

this melancholy appeal, and apparently he reflected on every side of the important question, before he would presume to answer.

"I take it, friend physicianer," he at length gravely replied, "that the chances of life and death, in your particular case, depend altogether on the will of Providence, as it may be pleased to manifest it, through the accursed windings of Indian cunning. For my own part, I see no great difference in the main end to be gained, inasmuch as it can matter no one greatly, yourself excepted, whether you live or die."

"Would you account the fall of a corner stone, from the foundations of the edifice of learning, a matter of indifference to contemporaries, or to posterity?" eagerly interrupted the indignant Obed. "Besides, my aged associate," he reproachfully added, "the interest that a man has in his own existence, is by no means trifling, however it may be eclipsed

by his devotion to more general and philanthropic feelings."

"What I would say is this," resumed the trapper, who was far from understanding all the subtle distinctions, with which his more learned companion so often saw fit to embellish his discourse; "there is but one birth and one death to all things, be it hound, or be it deer; be it red skin, or be it white. Both are in the hands of the Lord, it being as unlawful for man to strive to hasten the one, as impossible to prevent the other. But I will not say that something may not be done to put the last moment aside, for a while at least; and therefore it is a question, that any one has a right to put to his own wisdom, how far he will go, and how much pain he will suffer to lengthen out a time that may have been too long already. Many a dreary winter and scorching summer has gone by since I have turned, to the right hand or to the left, to add an hour to a

life that has already stretched beyond fourscore years. I keep myself ready to answer to my name as a soldier at evening roll-call. In my judgment, if your cases are left to Indian tempers, the policy of the great Sioux will lead his people to sacrifice you all; nor do I put much dependence on his seeming love for me; therefore it becomes a question whether you are ready for such a journey; and if, being ready, whether this is not as good a time to start as another. Should my opinion be asked, thus far will I give it in your favour; that is to say, it is my belief your life has been innocent enough, touching any great offences that you may have committed, though honesty compels me to add, that I think all you can lày claim to, on the score of activity in deeds, will not amount to any thing worth naming in the great account."

Obed turned a rueful eye on the calm, philosophic countenance of the other, as he answered with so discou-

raging a statement of his case, clearing his throat, as he did so, in order to conceal the desperate concern which began to beset his faculties, with a vestige of that pride, which rarely deserts poor human nature, even in the greatest emergencies.

"I believe, venerable hunter," he replied, "considering the question in all its several bearings, and assuming that your theory is just, it will be the safest to conclude that I am not prepared to make so hasty a departure, and that measures of precaution should be forthwith resorted to."

"Being in that mind," returned the deliberate trapper, "I will act for you as I would for myself; though as time has began to roll down the hill with you, I will just advise that you look to your case speedily, for it may so happen that your name will be heard, when quite as little prepared to answer to it as now."

With this amicable understanding, the

old man drew back again into the ring, where he stood musing on the course he should now adopt, with the singular mixture of decision and resignation that proceeded from his habits and his humility, and which united to form a character, in which excessive energy, and the most meek submission to the will of Providence, were oddly enough combined.

CHAPTER V.

The witch in Smithfield, shall be burned to ashes,
And you three shall be strangled on the gallows.
SHAKSPEARE.

THE Siouxes had awaited the issue of the foregoing dialogue with commendable patience. Most of the band were restrained, by the secret awe with which they regarded the mysterious character of Obed; while a few of the more intelligent chiefs gladly profited by the opportunity, to arrange their thoughts for the struggle that was now too plainly foreseen. Mahtoree influenced by neither of these feelings, was content to shew the trapper how much he conceded to his pleasure; and when the old man discontinued the discourse, he

received from the chief a glance, that was intended to remind him of the patience with which he had awaited his movements. A profound and motionless silence succeeded the short interruption. Then Mahtoree arose, evidently prepared to speak. First placing himself in an attitude of dignity, he turned a steady and severe look on the whole assembly. The expression of his eye, however, changed as it glanced across the different countenances of his supporters and of his opponents. To the former the look, though stern, was not threatening, while it seemed to tell the latter all the hazards they incurred in daring to brave the resentment of one so powerful.

Still, in the midst of so much hauteur and confidence, the sagacity and cunning of the Teton did not desert him. When he had thus thrown the gauntlet, as it were, to the whole tribe, and sufficiently asserted his claim to superiority, his mien became more affable and his

eye less angry. Then it was that he raised his voice, in the midst of a death-like stillness, varying its tones to suit the changing character of his images and of his eloquence.

"What is a Sioux?" the chief sagaciously began; "he is ruler of the prairies, and master of its beasts. The fishes in the 'river of troubled waters' know him, and come at his call. He is a fox in council; an eagle in sight; a grizzly bear in combat. A Dahcotah is a man!" After waiting for the low murmur of approbation, which followed this flattering portrait of his people, to subside, the Teton continued—"What is a Pawnee? A chief who only steals from women; a Red-skin who is not brave; a hunter that begs for his venison. In council he is a squirrel, hopping from place to place; he is an owl, that goes on the prairies at night; in battle he is an elk, whose legs are long. A Pawnee is a woman." Another pause

succeeded, during which a yell of delight broke from several mouths, and a demand was made, that the taunting words should be translated to the unconscious subject of their biting contempt. The old man took his cue from the eyes of Mahtoree, and complied. Hard-Heart listened gravely, and then, as if apprised that his time to speak had not arrived, he once more bent his look on the vacant air. The orator watched his countenance, with an expression that manifested how inextinguishable was the hatred he felt for the only chief, far and near, whose fame might advantageously be compared with his own. Though disappointed in not having touched the pride of one whom he regarded as a boy, he proceeded, what he considered as far more important, to quicken the tempers of the men of his own tribe, in order that they might be prepared to work his savage purposes. "If the earth was covered with rats, which are good for nothing," he said, "there

would be no room for buffaloes, which give food and clothes to an Indian. If the prairies were covered with Pawnees, there would be no room for the foot of a Dahcotah. A Loup is a rat, a Sioux a heavy buffaloe; let the buffaloes tread upon the rats, and make room for themselves.

"My brothers, a little child has spoken to you. He tells you, his hair is not gray, but frozen—that the grass will not grow where a Pale-face has died! Does he know the colour of the blood of a Big-knive? No! I know he does not; he has never seen it. What Dahcotah, besides Mahtoree, has ever struck a Pale-face? Not one. But Mahtoree must be silent. Every Teton will shut his ears when he speaks. The scalps over his lodge were taken by the women. They were taken by Mahtoree, and he is a woman. His mouth is shut; he waits for the feasts to sing among the girls!"

Notwithstanding the exclamations of

regret and resentment, which followed so abasing a declaration, the chief took his seat, as if determined to speak no more. But as the murmurs grew louder and more general, and there were threatening symptoms that the council would dissolve itself in confusion, he arose and resumed his speech, by changing his manner to the fierce and hurried enunciation of a warrior bent on revenge.

"Let my young men go look for Tetao!" he cried; "they will find his scalp, drying in Pawnee smoke. Where is the son of Boreecheena? His bones are whiter than the faces of his murderers. Is Mahhah asleep in his lodge? You know it is many moons since he started for the blessed prairies; would he were here, that he might say of what colour was the hand that took his scalp!"

In this strain the artful chief continued for many minutes, calling those warriors by name, who were known to have met their deaths in battle with the Pawnees, or in some of those lawless frays which

so often occurred between the Sioux bands and a class of white men, who were but little removed from them in the qualities of civilization. Time was not given to reflect on the merits, or rather the demerits, of most of the different individuals, to whom he alluded, in consequence of the rapid manner in which he ran over their names; but so cunningly did he time his events, and so thrilling did he make his appeals, aided as they were by the power of his deep-toned and stirring voice, that each of them struck an answering chord in the breast of some one of his auditors.

It was in the midst of one of his highest flights of eloquence, that a man, so aged as to walk with the greatest difficulty, entered the very centre of the circle, and took his stand directly in front of the speaker. An ear of great acuteness might possibly have detected that the tones of the orator faltered a little, as his flashing look first fell on this unexpected object; though the

change was so trifling, that none, but such as thoroughly knew the parties, would have suspected it. The stranger had once been as distinguished for his beauty and proportions, as had been his eagle eye for its irresistible and terrible glance. But his skin was now wrinkled, and his features furrowed with so many scars, as to have obtained for him, half a century before, from the French of the Canadas, a title which has been borne by so many of the heroes of France, and which had now been adopted into the language of the wild horde of whom we are writing, as the one most expressive of the deeds of their own brave. The murmur of Le Balafré, that ran through the assembly when he appeared, announced not only his name and the high estimation of his character, but how extraordinary his visit was considered. As he neither spoke nor moved, however, the sensation created by his appearance soon subsided, and then every eye was again turned upon the speaker, and every

ear once more drunk in the intoxication of his maddening appeals.

It would have been easy to have traced the triumph of Mahtoree, in the reflecting countenances of his auditors. It was not long before a look of ferocity and of revenge was to be seen seated on the grim visages of most of the warriors, and each new and crafty allusion to the policy of extinguishing their enemies, was followed by fresh and less restrained bursts of approbation. In the height of this success the Teton closed his speech, by a rapid appeal to the pride and hardihood of his native band, and suddenly took his seat.

In the midst of the murmurs of applause, which succeeded so remarkable an effort of eloquence, a low, feeble, and hollow voice was heard rising on the ear, as though it rolled from the inmost cavities of the human chest, and gathered strength and energy as it issued into the air. A solemn stillness followed the

sounds, and then the lips of the aged man were first seen to move. . .

"The day of Le Balafré is near its end," were the first words that were distinctly audible. "He is like a buffaloe, on whom the hair will grow no longer. He will soon be ready to leave his lodge, to go in search of another, that is far from the villages of the Siouxes; therefore, what he has to say concerns not him, but those he leaves behind him. His words are like the fruit on the tree, ripe and fit to be given to the chiefs.

"Many snows have fallen since Le Balafré has been found on the war-path. His blood has been very hot, but it has had time to cool. The Wahcondah gives him dreams of war no longer; he sees that it is better to live in peace.

"My brothers, one foot is turned to the happy hunting-grounds, the other will soon follow, and then an old chief will be seen looking for the prints of his father's moccasins, that he may make no mistake, but be sure to come before the

Master of Life, by the same path as so many good Indians have already travelled. But who will follow? Le Balafré has no son. His oldest has ridden too many Pawnee horses; the bones of the youngest have been gnawed by Konza dogs! Le Balafré has come to look for a young arm, on which he may lean, and to find a son, that when he is gone his lodge may not be empty. Tacheechana, the skipping fawn of the Tetons, is too weak, to prop a warrior, who is old. She looks before her and not backwards. Her mind is in the lodge of her husband."

The enunciation of the veteran warrior had been calm, but distinct and decided. His declaration was received in silence, and though several of the chiefs, who were in the councils of Mahtoree, turned their eyes on their leader, none presumed to oppose so aged and so venerated a brave in a resolution that was strictly in conformity to the usages of the nation. The Teton himself was content to await

the result with seeming composure, though the gleams of ferocity, that played about his eye, occasionally betrayed the nature of those feelings, with which he witnessed a procedure that was likely to rob him of that one of all his intended victims whom he most hated.

In the mean time Le Balafré moved with a slow and painful step towards the captives. He stopped before the person of Hard-Heart, whose faultless form, unchanging eye, and lofty mien, he contemplated long, with high and evident satisfaction. Then making a gesture of authority, he awaited, until his order had been obeyed, and the youth was released from the post and his bonds, by the same blow of the knife. When the young warrior was led nearer to his dimmed and failing sight, the examination was renewed, with all that strictness of scrutiny and admiration, which physical excellence is so apt to excite in the breast of a savage.

"It is good," the wary veteran at

length murmured, when he found that all his skill in the requisites of a brave could detect no blemish; "this is a leaping panther! Does my son speak with the tongue of a Teton?"

The intelligence, which lighted the eyes of the captive, betrayed how well he understood the question, but still he was far too haughty to communicate his ideas through the medium of a language that belonged to a hostile people. Some of the surrounding warriors explained to the old chief, that the captive was a Pawnee-Loup.

"My son opened his eyes on the 'waters of the wolves,'" said Le Balafré, in the language of that nation, "but he will shut them in the bend of the 'river with a troubled stream.' He was born a Pawnee, but he will die a Dahcotah. Look at me. I am a sycamore, that once covered many with my shadow. The leaves are fallen, and the branches begin to drop. But a single succour is springing from my roots; it is a little

vine, and it winds itself about a tree that is green. I have long looked for one fit to grow by my side. Now have I found it. Le Balafré is no longer without a son; his name will not be forgotten when he is gone! Men of the Tetons, I take this youth into my lodge."

No one was bold enough to dispute a right that had so often been exercised by warriors far inferior to the present speaker, and the adoption was listened to in a grave and respectful silence. Le Balafré took his intended son by the arm, and leading him into the very centre of the circle, he stepped aside with an air of triumph, in order that the spectators might approve of his choice. Mahtoree betrayed no evidence of his intentions, but rather seemed to await a moment better suited to the crafty policy of his character. The more experienced and sagacious chiefs distinctly foresaw the utter impossibility of two partisans so renowned, so hostile, and who had so long been rivals in fame as their prisoner

and their native leader, existing amicably in the same tribe. Still the character of Le Balafré was so imposing, and the custom to which he had resorted so sacred, that none dared to lift a voice in opposition to the measure. They watched the result with increasing interest, but with a coldness of demeanour that concealed the nature of their inquietude. From this state of embarrassment, and as it might readily have proved of disorganization, the tribe was unexpectedly relieved by the decision of the one most interested in the success of the aged chief's designs.

During the whole of the foregoing scene, it would have been difficult to have traced a single distinct emotion in the lineaments of the captive. He had heard his release proclaimed, with the same indifference as the order to bind him to the stake. But now, that the moment had arrived when it became necessary to make his election, he spoke in a way to prove that the fortitude,

which had bought him so distinguished a name, had in no degree deserted him.

"My father is very old, but he has not yet looked upon every thing," said Hard-heart, in a voice so clear as to be heard by all in presence. "He has never seen a buffaloe change to a bat. He will never see a Pawnee become a Sioux!"

There was a suddenness, and yet a calmness in the manner of delivering this decision, which assured most of the auditors that it was unalterable. The heart of Le Balafré, however, was yearning towards the youth, and the fondness of age was not so readily repulsed. Reproving the burst of admiration and triumph, which the boldness of the declaration and the freshened hopes of revenge had given rise to, by turning his gleaming eye around the band, the veteran again addressed his adopted child, as though his purpose was not to be denied.

"It is well," he said; "such are the

words a brave should use, that the warriors might see his heart. The day has been when the voice of Le Balafré was loudest among the lodges of the Konzas. But the root of a white hair is wisdom. My child will show the Tetons that he is brave, by striking their enemies. Men of the Dahcotahs, this is my son!"

The Pawnee hesitated a moment, and then stepping in front of the chief, he took his hard and wrinkled hand, and laid it with reverence on his head, as if to acknowledge the extent of his obligation. Then recoiling a step, he raised his person to its greatest elevation, and looked upon the hostile band, by whom he was environed, with an air of loftiness and disdain, as he spoke aloud, in the language of the Siouxes—

"Hard-heart has looked at himself within and without. He has thought of all he has done in the hunts and in the wars. Every where he is the same. There is no change. He is in all things a Pawnee. He has struck so many

Tetons that he could never eat in their lodges. His arrows would fly backwards; the point of his lance would be on the wrong end; their friends would weep at every whoop he gave; their enemies would laugh. Do the Tetons know a Loup? Let them look at him again. His head is painted, his arm is flesh, but his heart is rock. When the Tetons see the sun come from the Rocky Mountains, and move towards the land of the Pale-faces, the mind of Hard-heart will soften, and his spirit will become Sioux: until that day, he will live and die a Pawnee!"

A yell of delight, in which admiration and ferocity were fearfully mingled, interrupted the speaker, and but too clearly announced the character of his fate. The captive awaited a moment, for the commotion to subside, and then turning again to Le Balafré, he continued, in tones far more conciliating and kind, as if he felt the propriety of softening his

refusal in a manner not to wound the pride of one who would so gladly be his benefactor.

"Let my father lean heavier on the fawn of the Dahcotahs," he said. "She is weak now, but as her lodge fills with young, she will be stronger. See," he added, directing the eyes of the other to the earnest countenance of the attentive trapper; "Hard-heart is not without a gray head to show him the path to the blessed prairies. If he ever has another father, it shall be that just warrior."

Le Balafré turned away in disappointment from the youth, and approached the stranger, who had thus anticipated his design. The examination between these two aged men was long, mutual, and curious. It was not easy to detect the real character of the trapper through the mask which the hardships of so many years had laid upon his features, especially when aided by his wild and peculiar attire. Some moments elapsed

before the Teton spoke, and then it was in doubt whether he addressed one like himself, or some wanderer of that race who, he had heard, were spreading themselves, like hungry locusts, throughout the land.

"The head of my brother is very white," he said, "but the eye of Le Balafré is no longer like the eagle's. Of what colour is his skin?"

"The Wahcondah made me like these you see waiting for a Dahcotah judgment; but fair and foul has coloured me darker than the skin of a fox. What of that! Though the bark is ragged and riven, the heart of the tree is sound!"

"My brother is a Big-knife! Let him turn his face towards the setting sun, and open his eyes. Does he see the salt lake beyond the mountains?"

"Time has been, Teton, when few could see the white on the eagle's head farther than I; but the glare of fourscore and seven winters has dimmed my

eyes, and but little can I boast of sight in my latter days. Does the Sioux think a Pale-face is a god, that he can look through the hills?"

"Then let my brother look at me. I am nigh him, and he can see that I am but a foolish Red-man. Why cannot his people see every thing, since they crave all?"

"I understand you, chief; nor will I gainsay the justice of your words, seeing that they are too much founded in truth. But though born of the race you love so little, my worst enemy, not even a lying Mingo, would dare to say that I ever laid hands on the goods of another, except such as were taken in manful warfare; or that I ever coveted more ground than the Lord has intended each man to fill."

"And yet my brother has come among the Red-skins to find a son?"

The trapper laid a finger on the naked shoulder of Le Balafré, and looked into

his scarred countenance with a wistful and confidential expression, as he answered—

"Ay; but it was only that I might do good to the boy. If you think, Dahcotah, that I adopted the youth in order to prop my age, you do as much injustice to my good-will, as you seem to know little of the marciless intentions of your own people. I have made him my son, that he may know that one is left behind him—Peace, Hector, peace! is this decent, pup, when gray-heads are counselling together, to break in upon their discourse with the whinings of a hound? The dog is old, Teton, and though well taught in respect of behaviour, he is getting like ourselves, I fancy, something forgetful of the fashions of his youth."

Further discourse between these veterans, was interrupted by a discordant yell, which burst at that moment from the lips of the dozen withered crones, who

have already been mentioned as having forced themselves into a conspicuous part of the circle. The outcry was excited by a sudden change in the air of Hard-Heart. When the old men turned towards the youth, they saw him standing in the very centre of the ring, with his head erect, his eye fixed on vacancy, one leg advanced and an arm a little raised, as if all his faculties were absorbed in the act of listening. A smile lighted his countenance for a single moment, and then the whole man sunk again into his former look of dignity and coldness, as though suddenly recalled to self-possession. The move had been construed into contempt, and even the tempers of the chiefs began to be excited. Unable to restrain their fury, the women broke into the circle in a body, and commenced their attack by loading the captive with the most bitter revilings. They boasted of the various exploits, which their sons had achieved at the expense of the different tribes of the Pawnees. They under-

valued his own reputation, and told him to look at Mahtoree, if he had never yet seen a warrior. They accused him of having been suckled by a doe, and of having drunk in cowardice with his mother's milk. In short, they lavished upon their unmoved captive a torrent of that vindictive abuse, in which the women of the savages are so well known to excel, but which has been too often described to need a repetition here.

The effect of this outbreaking was inevitable. La Balafré turned away disappointed, and hid himself in the crowd, while the trapper, whose honest features were working with his inward emotions, pressed nigher to his young friend, as those who are linked to the criminal, by ties so strong as to brave the opinions of men, are often seen to stand about the place of execution to support his dying moments. The excitement soon spread among the inferior warriors, though the chiefs still forbore to make the signal, which committed the victim to their

mercy. Mahtoree, who had awaited such a movement among his fellows, with the wary design of concealing his own jealous hatred, soon grew weary of delay, and, by a glance of his eye, encouraged the tormentors to proceed.

Weucha, who, eager for this sanction, had long stood watching the countenance of the chief, bounded forward at the signal like a blood-hound loosened from the leash. Forcing his way into the centre of the hags, who were already proceeding from abuse to violence, he reproved their impatience, and bade them wait until a warrior had began to torment, and then they should see their victim shed tears like a woman.

The heartless savage commenced his efforts by flourishing his tomahawk about the head of the captive, in such a manner as to give reason to suppose that each blow would bury the weapon in the flesh, while it was so governed as not to touch the skin. To this customary expedient Hard-Heart was per-

fectly insensible. His eye kept the same steady, riveted look on the air, though the glittering axe described, in its evolutions, a bright circle of light before his countenance. Frustrated in this attempt, the callous Sioux laid the cold edge on the naked head of his victim, and began to describe the different manners in which a prisoner might be flayed. The women kept time to his cruelties with their taunts, and endeavoured to force some expression of the lingerings of nature from the insensible features of the Pawnee. But he evidently reserved himself for the chiefs, and for those moments of extreme anguish, when the loftiness of his spirit might evince itself in a manner better becoming his high and untarnished reputation.

The eyes of the trapper followed every movement of the tomahawk, with the interest of a real father, until at length, unable to command his indignation, he exclaimed—

"My son has forgotten his cunning.

This is a low-minded Indian, and one easily hurried into folly. I cannot do the thing myself, for my traditions forbid a dying warrior to revile his persecutors, but the gifts of a Red-skin are different. Let the Pawnee say the bitter words and purchase an easy death. I will answer for his success, provided he speaks before the grave men set their wisdom to back the folly of this fool."

The savage Sioux, who heard his words without comprehending their meaning, turned to the speaker, and menaced him with instant death for his temerity.

"Ay, work your will," said the unflinching old man; "I am as ready now as I shall be to-morrow. Though it would be a death that an honest man might not wish to die. Look at that noble Pawnee, Teton, and see what a Red-skin may become, who fears the Master of Life and follows his laws. How many of your people has he sent to the distant prairies?" he continued,

in a sort of pious fraud, thinking that while the danger menaced himself, there could surely be no sin in extolling the merits of another; "how many howling Siouxes has he struck, like a warrior, in open combat, while arrows were sailing in the air plentier than flakes of falling snow? Go! Will Weucha speak the name of one enemy he has ever struck?"

"Hard-Heart!" shouted the Sioux, turning in his fury, and aiming a deadly blow at the head of his victim. His arm fell into the hollow of the captive's hand. For a single moment the two stood as though entranced in that attitude, the one paralyzed by so unexpected a resistance, and the other bending his head, not to meet his death, but in the act of the most intense attention. The women screamed with triumph, for they thought the nerves of the captive had at length failed him. The trapper trembled for the honour of his friend, and Hector, as if conscious of what was passing, raised

his nose into the air, and uttered a piteous howl.

But the Pawnee hesitated only for that moment. Raising the other hand, like lightning, the tomahawk flashed in the air, and Weucha sunk to his feet, brained to the eye. Then cutting a way with the bloody weapon, he darted through the opening left by the frightened women, and seemed to descend the declivity at a single bound.

Had a bolt from Heaven fallen in the midst of the Teton band, it would not have occasioned greater consternation than this act of desperate hardihood. A shrill plaintive cry burst from the lips of all the women, and there was a moment that even the oldest warriors appeared to have lost their faculties. This stupor endured only for the instant. It was succeeded by a yell of revenge, that burst from a hundred throats, while as many warriors started forward at the cry, bent on the most bloody retribution. But a powerful and authoritative call from

Mahtoree arrested every foot. The chief, in whose countenance disappointment and rage were struggling with the affected composure of his station, extended an arm towards the river, and the whole mystery was explained.

Hard-Heart had already crossed near half the bottom, which lay between the acclivity and the water. At this precise moment a band of armed and mounted Pawnees turned a swell, and galloped to the margin of the stream, into which the plunge of the fugitive was now distinctly heard. A few minutes sufficed for his vigorous arm to conquer the passage, and then the shout from the opposite shore told the humbled Tetons the whole extent of the triumph of their adversaries.

CHAPTER VI.

If that shepherd be not in band-fast, let him fly; the curses he shall have, the tortures he shall feel, will break the back of man the heart of monster.

SHAKSPEARE

It will readily be seen that the event just related was attended by an extraordinary sensation among the Siouxes. In leading the hunters of the band back to the encampment, their chief had neglected none of the customary precautions of Indian prudence, in order that his trail might escape the eyes of his enemies. It would seem, however, that the Pawnees had not only made the dangerous discovery, but had managed with great art to draw nigh the place by the only side on which it was thought unnecessary to guard the approaches

with the usual line of sentinels. The latter, who were scattered along the different little eminences which lay in the rear of the lodges, were among the last to be apprized of the danger.

In such a crisis there was little time for deliberation. It was by exhibiting the force of his character in scenes of similar difficulty, that Mahtoree had obtained and strengthened his ascendancy among his people, nor did he seem likely to lose it by the manifestation of any indecision on the present occasion. In the midst of the screams of the young, the shrieks of the women, and the wild howlings of the crones, which were sufficient of themselves to have created a chaos in the thoughts of one less accustomed to act in emergencies, he promptly asserted his authority, issuing his orders with the coolness of a veteran.

While the warriors were arming, the boys were dispatched to the bottom for the horses. The tents were hastily struck by the women, and disposed of

on such of the beasts as were not deemed fit to be trusted in combat. The infants were cast upon the backs of their mothers, and those children, who were of a size to march, were driven to the rear, like a herd of less reasoning animals. Though these several movements were made amid outcries, and a clamour, that likened the place to another Babel, they were executed with incredible alacrity and intelligence.

In the mean time, Mahtoree neglected no duty that belonged to his responsible station. From the elevation on which he stood, he could command a perfect view of the force and evolutions of the hostile party. A grim smile lighted his visage, when he found that, in point of numbers, his own band was greatly the superior. Notwithstanding this advantage, however, there were other points of inequality, which would probably have a tendency to render his success, in the approaching conflict, exceedingly

doubtful. His people were the inhabitants of a more northern and less hospitable region than their enemies, and were far from being rich in that species of property, horses and arms, which constitutes the most highly prized wealth of a western Indian. The band in view was mounted to a man, and as it had come so far to rescue, or to revenge their greatest partisan, he had no reason to doubt its being composed entirely of braves. On the other hand, many of his followers were far better in a hunt than in a combat; men who might serve to divert the attention of his foes, but from whom he could expect little desperate service. Still his flashing eye glanced over a body of warriors on whom he had often relied, and who had never deceived him, and though, in the precise position in which he found himself, he felt no disposition to precipitate the conflict, he certainly would have had no intention to avoid it, had not the presence of his women and children placed

the option altogether in the power of his adversaries.

On the other hand, the Pawnees, so unexpectedly successful in their first and greatest object, manifested no intention to drive matters to an issue. The river was a dangerous barrier to pass in the face of a determined foe, and it would now have been in perfect accordance with their cautious policy, to have retired, for a season, in order that their onset might be made in the hours of darkness and of seeming security. But there was a spirit in their chief that elevated him, for the moment, high above the ordinary expedients of savage warfare. His bosom burned with the desire to wipe out that disgrace, of which he had been the subject, and it is possible, that he believed the retiring camp of the Siouxes contained a prize, that begun to have a value in his eyes, far exceeding any that could be found in fifty Teton scalps. Let that be as it might, Hard-Heart had no sooner

received the brief congratulations of his band, and communicated to the chiefs such facts as were important to be known, than he prepared himself to act such a part in the coming conflict, as would at once maintain his well-earned reputation and gratify his secret wishes. A led horse, one that had been long trained in the hunts, had been brought to receive his master, with but little hope that his services would ever be needed again in this life. With a delicacy and consideration, that proved how much the generous qualities of the youth had touched the feelings of his people, a bow, a lance, and a quiver, were thrown across the animal, which it had been intended to immolate on the grave of the young brave; a species of care that would have superseded the necessity for the pious duty that the trapper had pledged himself to perform.

Though Hard-Heart was sensible of the kindness of his warriors, and believed that a chief, furnished with such

appointments, might depart with credit for the distant hunting-grounds of the Master of Life, he seemed equally disposed to think that they might be rendered quite as useful in the actual state of things. His countenance lighted with a gleam of stern pleasure, as he tried the elasticity of the bow, and poised the well-balanced spear. The glance he bestowed on the shield was more cursory and indifferent, but the exultation, with which he threw himself on the back of his most favoured war-horse was so great, as to break through all the forms of Indian reserve. He rode to and fro among his scarcely less delighted warriors, managing the animal with a grace and address that no artificial rules can ever supply, at times flourishing his lance, as if to secure himself of his seat, and at others examining critically into the condition of the fusee, with which he had also been furnished, with the fondness of one, who was miraculously restored to the pos-

session of treasures that had ever constituted his pride and his happiness.

It was at this particular moment that Mahtoree, having completed the necessary arrangements, prepared to make a more decisive movement. The Teton had found no little embarrassment in disposing of his captives. The tents of the squatter were still in sight, and his wary cunning did not fail to apprize him, that it was quite as necessary to guard against an attack from that quarter, as to watch the motions of his more open and more active foes. His first impulse had been to make the tomahawk suffice for the men, and to trust the females under the same protection as the women of his band. But the manner in which many of his braves continued to regard the imaginary medicine of the Long-knives, forewarned him of the danger of so hazardous an experiment on the eve of a battle. It might be deemed the omen of defeat. In this dilemma he motioned to a su-

perannuated warrior, to whom he had confided the charge of the non-combatants, and leading him apart, he placed a finger significantly on his shoulder, as he said in a tone in which authority was tempered by confidence—

"When my young men are striking the Pawnees, give the women knives. Enough; my father is very old; he does not want to hear wisdom from a boy."

The grim old savage returned a look of ferocious assent, and then the mind of the chief appeared to be at rest on this important subject. From that moment he bestowed all his care on the achievement of his revenge and the maintenance of his martial character. Throwing himself on his horse, he made a sign, with the air of a prince, to his followers, to imitate his example, interrupting without ceremony the war-songs and solemn rites, by which many among them were stimulating their spirits to deeds of daring. When all were in order, the whole moved with great steadi-

ness and silence towards the margin of the river.

The hostile bands were now only separated by the water. The width of the stream was too great to admit of the use of the ordinary Indian missiles, but a few useless shots were exchanged from the fusees of the chiefs, more in bravado than with any expectation of doing execution. As some time was suffered to elapse, in demonstrations and abortive efforts, we shall leave them, for that period, to return to such of our characters as remained in the hands of the savages.

We have shed much ink in vain, and wasted quires, that might possibly have been better employed, if it be necessary now to tell the reader that few of the foregoing movements escaped the observation of the experienced trapper. He had been, in common with the rest, astonished at the sudden act of Hard-Heart, and there was a single moment, when a feeling of regret and mortifica-

tion got the better of his longings to save the life of the youth. The simple and well-intentioned old man would have felt, at witnessing any failure of firmness on the part of a warrior, who had so strongly excited his sympathies, the same species of sorrow that a Christian parent would suffer in hanging over the dying moments of an impious child. But when, instead of an impotent and unmanly struggle for existence, he found that his friend had forborne, with the customary and dignified submission of an Indian warrior, until an opportunity had offered to escape, and that he had then manifested the spirit and decision of the most gifted brave, his gratification became nearly too powerful to be concealed. In the midst of the wailing and commotion, which succeeded the death of Weucha and the escape of the captive, he placed himself nigh the persons of his white associates, with a determination of interfering, at every hazard, should the fury of the savages

take that direction. The appearance of the hostile band spared him however so desperate and probably so fruitless an effort, and left him to pursue his observations and to mature his plans more at leisure.

He particularly remarked that, while by far the greater part of the women and all the children, together with the effects of the party, were hurried to the rear, probably with an order to secrete themselves in some of the adjacent woods, the tent of Mahtorce himself was left standing, and its contents undisturbed. Two chosen horses, however, stood near by, held by a couple of youths, who were too young to go into the conflict, and yet of an age to understand the management of the beasts. The trapper perceived in this arrangement the reluctance of Mahtorce to trust his newly-found "flowers" beyond the reach of his eye, and, at the same time, his forethought in providing against any reverse of fortune. Neither

had the manner of the Teton in giving his commission to the old savage, nor the fierce pleasure with which the latter had received the bloody charge, escaped his observation. From all these mysterious movements, the old man was aware that the crisis was at hand, and he summoned the utmost knowledge he had acquired in so long a life, to aid him in the desperate conjuncture. It was while musing on the means to be employed, that the Doctor again attracted his attention to himself, by a piteous appeal for assistance.

"Venerable trapper, or, as I may now say, liberator," commenced the dolorous Obed, "it would seem, that a fitting time has at length arrived to dissever the unnatural and altogether irregular connexion, which exists between my inferior members and the body of Asinus. Perhaps if such a portion of my limbs were released as might leave me master of the remainder, and this favourable opportunity were suitably

improved, by making a forced march towards the settlements, all hopes of preserving the treasures of knowledge, of which I am the unworthy receptacle, would not be lost. The importance of the results is surely worth the hazard of the experiment."

"I know not, I know not," returned the deliberate old man; "the vermin and reptiles which you bear about you, were intended by the Lord for the prairies, and I see no good in sending them into regions that may not suit their natures. And, moreover, you may be of great and particular use as you now sit on the ass, though it creates no wonder in my mind to perceive that you are ignorant of it, seeing that usefulness is altogether a new calling to so bookish a man."

"Of what service can I be in this painful thraldom, in which the animal functions are in a manner suspended, and the spiritual, or intellectual, blinded by the secret sympathy that unites mind

to matter. There is likely to be blood spilt between yonder hosts of adverse heathens, and, though but little desiring the office, it would be better that I should employ myself in surgical experiments, than in thus wasting the precious moments, mortifying both soul and body."

"It is little that a Red-skin would care to have a physicianer at his hurts, while the whoop is ringing in his ears. Patience is a virtue in an Indian, and can be no shame to a Christian white man. Look at these hags of squaws, friend Doctor; I have no judgment in savage tempers, if they are not bloody-minded, and ready to work their accursed pleasures on us all. Now so long as you keep upon the ass, and maintain the fierce look which is far from being your natural gift, fear of so great a medicine may serve to keep down their courage. I am placed here, like a general at the opening of the battle, and it has become my duty to make such use of all my force as, in my judg-

ment, each is best fitted to perform. If I know these niceties, you will be more serviceable for your countenance, just now, than in any more stirring exploits."

"Harkee, old trapper," shouted Paul, whose patience could no longer maintain itself under the calculating and prolix explanations of the other, "suppose you cut two things I can name, short off. That is to say, your conversation, which is agreeable enough over a well-baked buffaloe's hump, and these dammable thongs of hide, which, according to my experience, can be pleasant no where. A single stroke of your knife would be of more service, just now, than the longest speech that was ever made in a Kentucky court-house."

"Ay, court-houses are the 'happy hunting-grounds,' as a Red-skin would say, for them that are born with gifts no better than such as lie in the tongue. I was carried into one of the lawless holes myself, once, and it was all about

a thing of no more value than the skin of a deer. The Lord forgive them! the Lord forgive them! they knew no better, and they did according to their weak judgments, and therefore the more are they to be pitied; and yet it was a solemn sight to see an aged man, who had always lived in the air, laid neck and heels by the law, and held up as a spectacle for the women and boys of a wasteful settlement to point their fingers at!"

"If such be your commendable opinions of confinement, honest friend, you had better manifest the same, by putting us at liberty with as little delay as possible," said Middleton, who, like his companion, began to find the tardiness of his often-tried companion quite as extraordinary as it was disagreeable.

"I should greatly like to do the same; especially in your behalf, Captain, who, being a soldier, might find not only pleasure but profit in examining, more at your ease, into the circumventions and cunning of an Indian fight.

As to our friend here, it is but of little matter, how much of this affair he examines, or how little, seeing that a bee is not to be overcome in the same manner as an Indian."

" Old man, this trifling with our misery is inconsiderate, to give it a name no harsher—"

" Ay, your gran'ther was of a hot and hurrying mind, and one must not expect, that the young of a panther will crawl the 'arth like the litter of a porcupine. Now keep you both silent, and what I say shall have the appearance of being spoken concerning the movements that are going on in the bottom; all of which will serve to put jealousy to sleep, and to shut the eyes of such as rarely close them on wickedness and cruelty. In the first place, then, you must know that I have reason to think yonder treacherous Teton has left an order to put us all to death, so soon as he thinks the deed may be done secretly, and without tumult."

"Great Heaven! will you suffer us to be butchered like unresisting sheep?"

"Hist, Captain, hist; a hot temper is none of the best, when cunning is more needed than blows. Ah, the Pawnee is a noble boy! it would do your heart good to see how he draws off from the river, in order to invite his enemies to cross; and yet, according to my failing sight, they count two warriors to his one! But as I was saying, little good comes of haste and thoughtlessness. The facts are so plain, that any child may see into their wisdom. The savages are of many minds as to the manner of our treatment. Some fear us for our colour, and would gladly let us go, and some would show us the mercy that the doe receives from the hungry wolf. When opposition gets fairly into the councils of a tribe, it is rare that humanity is the gainer. Now see you these wrinkled and cruel-minded squaws—No, you cannot see them as you lie, but nevertheless they are here, ready and willing, like

so many she-bears, to work their will upon us so soon as the proper time shall come."

"Harkee, old gentleman trapper," interrupted Paul, with a little bitterness in his manner, "do you tell us these matters for our amusement or for your own? If for ours, you may keep your breath for the next race you run, as I am tickled nearly to suffocation, already, with my part of the fun."

"Hist," — said the trapper, cutting with great dexterity and rapidity the thong which bound one of the arms of Paul to his body, and dropping his knife at the same time within the reach of the liberated hand. "Hist, boy, hist; that was a lucky moment! The yell from the bottom drew the eyes of these blood-suckers in another quarter, and so far we are safe. Now make a proper use of your advantages; but be careful that what you do is done without beeing seen."

"Thank you for this small favour, old deliberation," muttered the bee-hunter,

" though it comes like a snow in May, somewhat out of season."

" Foolish boy!" reproachfully exclaimed the other, who had moved to a little distance from his friends, and appeared to be attentively regarding the movements of the hostile parties, " will you never learn to know the wisdom of patience? And you, too, Captain; though a man myself, that seldom ruffles his temper by vain feelings, I see that you are silent, because you scorn to ask favours any longer from one you think too slow to grant them. No doubt, ye are both young, and filled with the pride of your strength and manhood, and I dare say you thought it only needful to cut the thongs, to leave you masters of the ground. But he that has seen much is apt to think much. Had I run like a bustling old woman to have given you freedom, these hags of the Siouxes would have seen the same, and then where would you both have found yourselves? under the tomahawk and the knife, like

helpless and outcrying children, though gifted with the size and beards of men. Ask our friend, the bee-hunter, in what condition he finds himself to struggle with a Têton boy, after so many hours of bondage; much less with a dozen merciless and blood-thirsty squaws?

"Truly, old trapper," returned Paul, stretching his limbs, which were by this time entirely released, and endeavouring to restore the suspended circulation, "you have some judgmatical notions in these matters. Now here am I, Paul Hover, a man who will give in to few at a wrestle or a race, nearly as helpless as the day I paid my first visit to the house of old Paul, who is dead and gone, the Lord forgive him any little blunders he may have made while he tarried in Kentucky! Now there is my foot on the ground, so far as eyesight has any virtue, and yet it would take no great temptation to make me swear it didn't touch the earth by six inches. I say, honest friend, since you have done so much,

have the goodness to keep these damnable squaws, of whom you say so many interesting things, at a little distance, till I have got the blood of this arm in motion, and am ready to receive them politely."

The trapper made a sign that he perfectly understood the emergency of the case, and he walked towards the superannuated savage, who began to manifest an intention of commencing his assigned task, leaving the bee-hunter to recover the use of his limbs as well as he could, and to put Middleton in a similar situation to defend himself.

Mahtoree had not mistaken his man, in selecting the one he did to execute his bloody purpose. He had chosen one of those ruthless savages, more or less of whom are to be found in every tribe, who had purchased a certain share of military reputation, by the exhibition of a hardihood that found its impulses in an innate love of cruelty. Contrary to the high and chivalrous sentiment, which

among the Indians of the prairies renders it a deed of even greater merit to bear off the trophy of victory from a fallen foe, than to slay him, he had been remarkable for preferring the pleasure of destroying life to the glory of striking the dead. While the more self-devoted and ambitious braves were intent upon personal honour, he had always been seen, established behind some favourable cover, depriving the wounded of hope, by finishing that which a more gallant warrior had begun. In all the cruelties of the tribe he had ever been foremost, and no Sioux was so uniformly found on the side of merciless councils.

He had awaited, with an impatience which his long-practised restraint could with difficulty subdue, for the moment to arrive when he might proceed to execute the wishes of the great chief, without whose approbation and powerful protection he would not have dared to undertake a step that had so many opposers in the nation. But events had

been hastening to an issue between the hostile parties, and the time had now arrived, greatly to his secret and malignant joy, when he was free to act his will.

The trapper found him distributing knives to the ferocious hags, who received the presents chanting a low monotonous song, that recalled the losses of their people, in various conflicts with the whites, and which extolled the pleasures and glory of revenge. The appearance of such a group was enough of itself to have deterred one less accustomed to such sights than the old man from trusting himself within the circle of their wild and repulsive rites.

Each of the crones, as she received the weapon, commenced a slow and measured, but ungainly step, around the savage, until the whole were circling him in a sort of magic dance. The movements were timed, in some degree, by the words of their songs, as were their gestures by the ideas. When they spoke

of their own losses, they tossed their long straight locks of gray into the air, or suffered them to fall in confusion upon their withered necks; but as the sweetness of returning blow for blow was touched upon, by any one among them, it was answered by a common howl, as well as by gestures, that were sufficiently expressive of the manner in which they were exciting themselves to the necessary state of fury.

It was into the very centre of this ring of seeming demons that the trapper now stalked, with the same calmness and observation as he would have walked into a village church. No other change was made by his appearance, than a renewal of the threatening gestures, with, if possible, a still less equivocal display of their remorseless intentions. Making a sign for them to cease, the old man demanded—

"Why do the mothers of the Tetons sing with bitter tongues? The Pawnee prisoners are not yet in their village;

their young men have not come back loaded with scalps!"

He was answered by another general howl, and a few of the boldest of the furies even ventured to approach him, flourishing their knives within a dangerous proximity to his own steady eyeballs.

"It is a warrior you see, and no runner of the Long-knives, whose face grows paler at the sight of a tomahawk," returned the trapper, without moving a muscle. "Let the Sioux women think, if one White-skin dies, a hundred spring up where he falls."

Still the hags made no other answer than by increasing their speed in the circle, and occasionally raising the threatening expressions of their chant into louder and more intelligible strains. Suddenly one of the oldest and most ferocious of them all broke out of the ring, and skirred away in the direction of her victims, like a rapacious bird, that having wheeled on poised wings, for the time necessary to

insure its object, makes the final dart upon its prey. The others followed, a disorderly and screaming flock, fearful of being too late to reap their portion of the sanguinary pleasure.

"Mighty medicine of my people!" shouted the old man, in the Teton tongue; "lift your voice and speak, that the Sioux nation may hear."

Whether it was that Asinus had acquired so much knowledge, by his recent experience, as to know the value of his sonorous properties, or that the strange spectacle of a dozen hags flitting past him, filling the air with such sounds as were even grating to the ears of an ass, most moved his temper, it is certain that the animal did that which Obed was requested to do, and probably with far greater effect than if the naturalist had strove with his mightiest effort to be heard. It was the first time the strange beast had spoken since his arrival in the encampment. Admonished by so terrible a warning, the hags scattered themselves,

like vultures frightened from their prey, still screaming and but half diverted from their purpose.

In the mean time the sudden appearance and the imminency of the danger, had quickened the blood in the veins of Paul and Middleton, more than all their laborious frictions and physical expedients. The former had actually risen to his feet, and assumed an attitude which perhaps threatened more than the worthy bee-hunter was able to perform, and even the latter had mounted to his knees, and shewn a disposition to do good service for his life. The unaccountable release of the captives from their bonds was attributed by the hags to the incantations of the medicine, and the mistake was probably of as much service as the miraculous and timely interposition of Asinus in their favour.

"Now is the time to come out of our ambushment," exclaimed the old man, hastening to join his friends, "and to make open and manful war. It would

have been policy to have kept back the struggle, until the Captain was in better condition to join, but as we have unmasked our battery, why, we must maintain the ground—"

He was interrupted by feeling a gigantic hand on his shoulder. Turning under a sort of confused impression that necromancy was actually abroad in the place, he found that he was in the hands of a sorcerer no less dangerous and powerful than Ishmael Bush. The file of the squatter's well-armed sons, that was seen issuing from behind the still standing tent of Mahtoree, explained at once, not only the manner in which their rear had been turned, while their attention had been so earnestly bestowed on matters in front, but the utter impossibility of resistance.

Neither Ishmael nor his sons deemed it necessary to enter into prolix explanations. Middleton and Paul were bound again, with extraordinary silence and dispatch, and this time not even the

aged trapper was exempt from a similar fortune. The tent was struck, the females placed upon the horses, and the whole were on the way towards the squatter's encampment, with a celerity that might well have served to keep alive the idea of magic.

During this summary and brief disposition of things, the disappointed agent of Mahtoree and his callous associates were seen flying across the plain, in the direction of the retiring families; and when Ishmael left the spot with his prisoners and his booty, the ground, which had so lately been alive with the bustle and life of an extensive Indian encapment, was as still and empty as any other spot in those extensive wastes.

CHAPTER VII.

Is this proceeding just and honourable?

SHAKSPEARE.

DURING the occurrence of these events on the upland plain, the warriors on the bottom had not been idle. We left the adverse bands watching each other on the opposite banks of the stream, each endeavouring to excite its enemy to some act of indiscretion, by the most reproachful taunts and revilings. But the Pawnee chief was not slow to discover that his crafty antagonist had no objection to waste the time so idly, and, as they mutually proved, in expedients that were so entirely useless. He changed his plans, accordingly, and withdrew

from the bank, as has been already explained, through the mouth of the trapper, in order to invite the more numerous host of the Siouxes to cross. The challenge was not accepted, and the Loups were compelled to frame some other method to attain their end.

Instead of any longer throwing away the precious moments, in fruitless endeavours to induce his foe to cross the stream, the young partizan of the Pawnees led his troops, at a swift gallop, along its margin, in quest of some favourable spot, where by a sudden push he might throw his own band without loss to the opposite shore. The instant his object was discovered, each mounted Teton received a footman behind him, and Mahtoree was still enabled to concentrate his whole force against the effort. Perceiving that his design was anticipated, and unwilling to blow his horses by a race that would disqualify them for service even after they had succeeded in outstripping the more heavily-bur-

thened cattle of the Siouxes, Hard-Heart drew up, and came to a dead halt on the very margin of the water-course.

As the country was too open for any of the usual devices of savage warfare, and time was so pressing, the chivalrous Pawnee resolved to bring on the result by one of those acts of personal daring, for which the Indian braves are so remarkable, and by which they so often purchase their highest and dearest renown. The spot he had selected was favourable to such a project. The river, which throughout most of its course was deep and rapid, had expanded there to more than twice its customary width, and the rippling of its waters proved that it flowed over a shallow bottom. In the centre of the current there was an extensive and naked bed of sand, but a little raised above the level of the stream, and of a colour and consistency which warranted, to a practised eye, that it afforded a firm and safe foundation for the foot. To this spot the par-

tizan now turned his wistful gaze, nor was he long in making his decision. First speaking to his warriors, and apprising them of his intentions, he dashed into the current, and partly by swimming, and more by the use of his horse's feet, he quickly reached the island in safety.

The experience of Hard-Heart had not deceived him. When his snorting steed issued from the water, he found himself on a tremulous but damp and compact bed of sand, that was admirably adapted to the exhibition of the finest powers of the animal. The horse seemed conscious of the advantage, and bore his warlike rider, with an elasticity of step and a loftiness of air, that would have done no discredit to the highest trained and most generous charger. The blood of the chief himself quickened with the excitement of his striking situation. He sat the beast as though he was conscious that the eyes of two tribes were on his movements, and as

nothing could be more acceptable and grateful to his own band than this display of native grace and courage, so nothing could be more taunting and humiliating to their enemies.

The sudden appearance of the Pawnee on the sands was announced among the Tetons by a general yell of savage anger. A rush was made to the shore, followed by a discharge of fifty arrows and a few fusees, and on the part of several braves there was a plain manifestation of a desire to plunge into the water, in order to punish the temerity of their insolent foe. But a call and a mandate from Mahtoree checked the rising, and nearly ungovernable temper of his band. So far from allowing a single foot to be wet, or a repetition of the fruitless efforts of his people to drive away their foe with missiles, the whole of the party was commanded to retire from the shore, while he himself communicated his intentions to one or two of his most favoured followers.

When the Pawnees had observed the rush of their enemies, twenty warriors rode into the stream; but so soon as they perceived that the Tetons had withdrawn, they fell back to a man, leaving the young chief to the support of his own often-tried skill and well-established courage. The instructions of Hard-Heart, on quitting his band, had been worthy of the self-devotion and daring of his character. So long as single warriors came against him, he was to be left to the keeping of the Wahcondah and his own arm, but should the Siouxes attack him in numbers, he was to be sustained, man for man, even to the extent of his whole force. These generous orders were strictly obeyed; and though so many hearts in the troop panted to share in the glory and danger of their partizan; not a warrior was found among them all, who did not know how to conceal his impatience under the usual mask of Indian self-restraint. They watched the issue with quick and jealous eyes, nor

did a single exclamation of surprise escape them, when they saw, as will soon be apparent, that the experiment of their chief was as likely to conduce to peace as to war.

Mahtoree was not long in communicating his plans to his confidants, whom he as quickly dismissed to join their fellows in the rear. The Teton entered a short distance into the stream and halted. Here he raised his hand several times, with the palm outwards, and made several of those other signs, which are construed into a pledge of amicable intentions among the inhabitants of those regions. Then, as if to confirm the sincerity of his faith, he cast his fusee to the shore, and entered deeper into the water, where he again came to a stand, in order to see in what manner the Pawnee would receive his pledges of peace.

The crafty Sioux had not made his calculations on the noble and honest nature of his more youthful rival in vain.

Hard-Heart had continued galloping across the sands, during the discharge of missiles, and the appearance of a general onset, with the same proud and confident mien, as that with which he had at first braved the danger. When he saw the well-known person of the Teton partizan enter the river, he waved his hand in triumph, and flourishing his lance, he raised the thrilling war-cry of his people, as a challenge for him to come on. But when he saw the signs of a truce, though deeply practised in the treachery of savage combats, he disdained to show a less manly reliance on himself, than that which his enemy had seen fit to exhibit. Riding to the farthest extremity of the sands, he cast his own fusee from him, and returned to the point whence he had started.

The two chiefs were now armed alike. Each had his spear, his bow, his quiver, his little battle-axe, and his knife; and each had, also, a shield of hides, which might serve as a means of defence

against a surprise from any of these weapons. The Sioux no longer hesitated, but advanced deeper into the stream, and soon landed on a point of the island which his courteous adversary had left free for that purpose. Had one been there to watch the countenance of Mahtoree, as he crossed the water that separated him from the most formidable and the most hated of all his rivals, he might have fancied that he could trace the gleamings of a secret joy, breaking through the cloud which deep cunning and heartless treachery had drawn before his swarthy visage; and yet there would have been moments, when he might have believed that the flashings of the Teton's eye, and the expansion of his nostrils, had their origin in a nobler sentiment, and one far more worthy of an Indian chief.

The Pawnee had withdrawn to his own side of the sands, where he awaited the time of his enemy with calmness and dignity. The Teton made a short

turn or two, to curb the impatience of his steed, and to recover his seat after the effort of crossing, and then he rode into the centre of the place, and invited the other, by a courteous gesture, to approach. Hard-Heart drew nigh, until he found himself at a distance equally suited to advance or to retreat, and, in his turn, he came to a stand, keeping his glowing eye riveted on that of his enemy. A long and grave pause succeeded this movement, during which, these two distinguished braves, who were now, for the first time, confronted, with arms in their hands, sat regarding each other, like warriors who knew how to value the merits of a gallant foe, however hated. But the mien of Mahtoree was far less stern and warlike than that of the partizan of the Loups. Throwing his shield over his shoulder, as if to invite the confidence of the other, he made a gesture of salutation, and was the first to speak.

"Let the Pawnees go upon the hills,"

he said, "and look from the morning to the evening sun, from the country of snows to the land of many flowers, and they will see that the earth is very large. Why cannot the Red-men find room on it for all their villages?"

"Has the Teton ever known a warrior of the Loups come to his towns to beg a place for his lodge?" returned the young brave, with a look in which pride and contempt were not attempted to be concealed. "When the Pawnees hunt, do they send runners to ask Mahtoree if there are no Siouxes on the prairies?"

"When there is hunger in the lodge of a warrior, he looks for the buffaloe. which is given him for food," the Teton continued, struggling to keep down the ire which was excited by the other's scorn. "The Wahcondah has made more of them than he has made Indians. He has not said, this buffaloe shall be for a Pawnee, and that for a Dahcotah; this beaver for a Konza, and that for an Omahaw. No; he said, there are

enough. I love my red children, and I have given them great riches. The swiftest horse shall not go from the village of the Tetons to the village of the Loups in many suns. It is far from the towns of the Pawnees to the river of the Osages. There is room for all that I love. Why then should a red-man strike his brother?"

Hard-Heart dropped one end of his lance to the earth, and having also cast his shield across his shoulder, he sat leaning lightly on the weapon, as he answered with a smile of no doubtful expression—

"Are the Tetons weary of the hunts and of the war-path? do they wish to cook the venison, and not to kill it? Do they intend to let the hair cover their heads, that their enemies shall not know where to find their scalps? Go; a Pawnee warrior will never come among such Sioux squaws for a wife!"

A frightful gleam of ferocity broke out of the restraint of the Dahcotah's coun-

tenance, as he listened to this biting insult, but he was quick in subduing the tell-tale sentiment, in an expression much better suited to his present purpose.

"This is the way a young chief should talk of war," he answered with singular composure; "but Mahtoree has seen the misery of more winters than his brother. When the nights have been long, and darkness has been in his lodge, while the young men slept, he has thought of the hardships of his people. He has said to himself: Teton, count the scalps in your smoke. They are all red but two! Does the wolf destroy the wolf, or the rattler strike his brother? You know they do not; therefore, Teton, are you wrong to go on a path that leads to the village of a Red-skin, with the tomahawk in your hand."

"The Sioux would rob the warrior of his fame? He would say to his young men: go, dig roots in the prairies, and find holes to bury your tomahawks in; you are no longer braves!"

"If the tongue of Mahtoree ever says thus," returned the crafty chief, with an appearance of strong indignation, "let his women cut it out, and burn it with the offals of the buffaloe. No," he added, advancing a few feet nigher to the immoveable Hard-Heart, as if in the sincerity of his confidence; "the red-man can never want an enemy; they are plentier than the leaves on the trees, the birds in the heavens, or the buffaloes on the prairies. Let my brother open his eyes wide; does he nowhere see an enemy he would strike?"

"How long is it since the Teton counted the scalps of his warriors, that were drying in the smoke of a Pawnee lodge? The hand that took them is here, and ready to make eighteen, twenty."

"Now let not the mind of my brother go on a crooked path. If a Red-skin strikes a Red-skin for ever, who will be masters of the prairies, when no warriors are left to say, 'they are mine?' Hear

the voices of the old men. They tell us that in their days many Indians have come out of the woods under the rising sun, and that they have filled the prairies with their complaints of the robberies of the Long-knives. Where a Pale-face comes, a red-man cannot stay. The land is too small. They are always hungry. See, they are here already!"

As the Teton spoke, he pointed towards the tents of Ishmael, which were in plain sight, and then he paused, to await the effect of his words on the mind of his ingenuous foe. Hard-Heart listened, like one in whom a train of novel ideas had been excited by the reasoning of the other. He mused for near a minute, before he demanded—

"What do the wise chiefs of the Sioux say must be done?"

"They think that the moccasin of every Pale-face should be followed, like the track of the bear. That the Long-knife, who comes upon the prairie, should never go back. That the path shall be

open to those who come, and shut to those who go. Yonder are many. They have horses and guns. They are rich, but we are poor. Will the Pawnees meet the Tetons in council; and when the sun is gone behind the Rocky Mountains, they will say, this is for a Loup, and this for a Sioux."

"Teton—no! Hard-Heart has never struck the stranger. They come into his lodge and eat, and they go out in safety. A mighty chief is their friend! When my people call the young men to go on the war-path, the moccasin of Hard-Heart is the last. But his village is no sooner hid by the trees, than it is the first. No, Teton; his arm will never be lifted against the stranger."

"Fool, then die, with empty hands!" Mahtoree exclaimed, setting an arrow to his bow, and sending it, with a sudden and deadly aim, full at the naked bosom of his generous and confiding enemy.

The action of the treacherous Teton was too quick, and too well matured to

admit of any of the ordinary means of defence on the part of the Pawnee. His shield was hanging from his shoulder, and even the arrow had been suffered to fall from its place, and lay in the hollow of the hand, which grasped his bow. But the quick eye of the brave had time to see the movement, and his ready thoughts did not desert him. Pulling hard and with a jerk upon the rein, his steed reared his forward legs into the air, and, as the rider bent his body low, the horse itself served for a shield against the danger. So true, however, was the aim, and so powerful the force by which it was sent, that the arrow entered the neck of the animal and broke the skin on the opposite side.

Quicker than thought Hard-Heart sent back an answering arrow. The shield of the Teton was transfixed, but his person was untouched. For a few moments the twang of the bow and the glancing of arrows were incessant, notwithstanding the combatants were com-

pelled to give so large a portion of their care to the means of defence. The quivers were soon exhausted, and though blood had been drawn, it was not in sufficient quantities to impair the energy of the combat.

A series of masterly and rapid evolutions with the horses now commenced. The wheelings, the charges, the advances, and the circuitous retreats, were like the flights of circling swallows. Blows were struck with the lance, the sand was scattered in the air, and the shocks often seemed to be unavoidably fatal; but still each party kept his seat, and still each rein was managed with a steady hand. At length the Teton was driven to the necessity of throwing himself from his horse, to escape a thrust that would otherwise have proved fatal. The Pawnee passed his lance through the beast, uttering a shout of triumph as he galloped by. Turning in his tracks, he was about to push the advantage, when his own mettled steed staggered

and fell, under a burthen that he could no longer sustain. Mahtoree answered his premature cry of victory, and rushed upon the entangled youth, with knife and tomahawk. The utmost agility of Hard-Heart had not sufficed to extricate himself in season from the fallen beast. He saw that his case was desperate. Feeling for his knife, he took the blade between a finger and thumb, and cast it with admirable coolness at his advancing foe. The keen weapon whirled a few times in the air, and its point meeting the naked breast of the impetuous Sioux, the blade was buried to the buck-horn haft.

Mahtoree laid his hand on the weapon, and seemed to hesitate whether to withdraw it or not. For a moment his countenance darkened with the most inextinguishable hatred and ferocity, and then, as if inwardly admonished how little time he had to lose, he staggered to the edge of the sands, and halted with his feet in the water, The cunning and

duplicity, which had so long obscured the brighter and nobler traits of his character, were lost in the never dying sentiment of pride, which he had imbibed in youth.

"Boy of the Loups!" he said with a smile of grim satisfaction, "the scalp of a mighty Dahcotah shall never dry in Pawnee smoke!"

Drawing the knife from the wound he hurled it towards his enemy in disdain. Then shaking his arm at his successful foe, his swarthy countenance appearing to struggle with volumes of scorn and hatred that he could not utter with the tongue, he cast himself headlong into one of the most rapid veins of the current, his hand still waving in triumph above the fluid, even after his body had sunk into the tide for ever. Hard-Heart was by this time free. The silence, which had hitherto reigned in the bands, was suddenly broken by general and tumultuous shouts. Fifty of the adverse warriors were already in the river, has-

tening to destroy or to defend the conqueror, and the combat was rather on the eve of its commencement than near its termination. But to all these signs of danger and need, the young victor was insensible. He sprang for the knife, and bounded with the foot of an antelope along the sands, looking for the receding fluid, which concealed his prize. A dark, bloody spot indicated the place, and, armed with the knife, he plunged into the stream, resolute to die in the flood, or to return with his trophy.

In the mean time the sands became a scene of bloodshed and violence. Better mounted and perhaps more ardent, the Pawnees had, however, reached the spot in sufficient numbers to force their enemies to retire. The victors pushed their success to the opposite shore and gained the solid ground in the *mêlée* of the fight. Here they were met by all the unmounted Tetons, and, in their turn, they were forced to give way.

The combat now became more characteristic and circumspect. As the hot impulses, which had driven both parties to mingle in so deadly a struggle, began to cool, the chiefs were enabled to exercise their influence, and to temper the assaults with prudence. In consequence of the admonitions of their leaders, the Siouxes sought such covers as the grass afforded, or here and there some bush or slight inequality of the ground, and the charges of the Pawnee warriors necessarily became more wary, and of course less fatal.

In this manner the contest continued with a varied success, and without much loss. The Siouxes had succeeded in forcing themselves into a thick growth of rank grass, where the horses of their enemies could not enter, or where, when entered, they were worse than useless. It became necessary to dislodge the Tetons from this cover, or the object of the combat must be abandoned. Several desperate efforts had been repulsed, and

the disheartened Pawnees were beginning to think of a retreat, when the well-know war-cry of Hard-Heart was heard at hand, and at the next instant the chief appeared in their centre, flourishing the scalp of the Great Sioux, as a banner that would lead to victory.

He was greeted by a shout of delight, and followed into the cover, with an impetuosity that, for the moment, drove all before it. But the bloody trophy in the hand of the partizan served as an incentive to the attacked as well as to the assailants. Mahtoree had left many a daring brave behind him in his band, and the orator, who in the debates of that day had manifested such pacific thoughts, now exhibited the most generous self-devotion, in order to wrest the memorial of a man he had never loved, from the hands of the avowed enemies of his people.

The result was in favour of numbers. After a severe struggle, in which the finest displays of personal intrepidity

were exhibited by all the chiefs, the Pawnees were compelled to retire upon the open bottom, closely pressed by the Siouxes, who failed not to seize each foot of ground that was ceded by their enemies. Had the Tetons stayed their efforts on the margin of the grass, it is probable that the honour of the day would have been theirs, notwithstanding the irretrievable loss they had sustained in the death of Mahtoree. But the more reckless braves of the band were guilty of an indiscretion, that entirely changed the fortunes of the fight, and suddenly stripped them of all their hard-earned advantages.

A Pawnee chief had sunk under the numerous wounds he had received, and he fell, a target for a dozen arrows, in the very last groupe of his retiring party. Regardless alike of inflicting further injury on their foes, and of the temerity of the act, every Sioux brave bounded forward with a whoop, each man burning with the wish to reap the high

renown of striking the body of the dead. They were met by Hard-Heart and a chosen knot of warriors, all of whom were just as stoutly bent on saving the honour of their nation from so foul a stain. The struggle was now hand to hand, and blood began to flow more freely. As the Pawnees retired with the body, the Siouxes pressed upon their foosteps, and at length the whole of the latter broke out of the cover with a common yell, and threatened to bear down all opposition by sheer physical superiority.

The fate of Hard-Heart and his companions, all of whom would have died rather than relinquish their object, would now have been quickly sealed, but for a powerful and unlooked for interposition in their favour. A shout was heard from a little brake on the left, and a volley from the fatal western rifle immediately succeeded. Some five or six Siouxes leaped forward and fell in the death agony at the reports, and every

arm among them was as suddenly suspended, as though the lightning had flashed from the clouds to aid the cause of the Loups. Then came Ishmael and his stout sons in open view, bearing down upon their late treacherous allies, with looks and voices that proclaimed the character of their succour.

The shock was too much for the fortitude of the Tetons. Several of their bravest chiefs had already fallen, and those that remained were instantly abandoned by the whole of the inferior herd. A few of the most desperate braves still lingered nigh the fatal symbol of their honour, and there nobly met their deaths under the blows of the re-encouraged Pawnees. A second discharge from the rifles of the squatter and his party, however, completed the victory.

The Siouxes were now to be seen flying to more distant covers, with the same eagerness and desperation as, a few moments before, they had been

plunging into the fight. The triumphant Pawnees bounded forward in chase, like so many high-blooded and well-trained hounds. On every side were heard the cries of victory, or the yell of revenge. A few of the fugitives endeavoured to bear away the bodies of their fallen warriors, but the hot pursuit quickly compelled them to abandon the slain, in order to preserve the living. Among all the struggles, which were made on that occasion, to guard the honour of the Siouxes from the stain which their peculiar opinions attached to the possession of the scalp of a fallen brave, but one solitary instance of success occurred.

The opposition of a particular chief to the hostile proceedings in the councils of that morning has been already seen. But, after having raised his voice in vain, in support of peace, his arm was not backward in doing its duty in the war. His prowess has been mentioned, and it was chiefly by his courage

and example, that the Tetons sustained themselves in the heroic manner they did, when the death of Mahtoree was known. This warrior, who was called in the figurative language of his people, 'the Swooping Eagle,' had been the last to abandon the hopes of victory. When he found that the support of the dreaded rifle had robbed his band of their hard-earned advantages, he sullenly retired amid a shower of missiles, to the secret spot where he had hid his horse, in the mazes of the highest grass. Here he found a new and an entirely unexpected competitor, ready to dispute with him for the possession of the beast. It was Boreecheena, the aged friend of Mahtoree; he whose voice had been given in opposition to his own wiser opinions, transfixed with an arrow, and evidently suffering under the pangs of approaching death.

"I have been on my last war-path," said the grim old warrior, when he found that the real owner of the animal had

come to claim his property; "shall a Pawnee carry the white hairs of a Sioux into his village, to be a scorn to his women and children?"

The other grasped his hand, answering to the appeal with the stern look of inflexible resolution. With this silent pledge, he assisted the wounded man to mount. So soon as he had led the horse to the margin of the cover, he threw himself also on its back, and securing his companion to his belt, he issued on the open plain, trusting entirely to the well-known speed of the beast for their mutual safety. The Pawnees were not long in catching a view of these new objects, and several turned their steeds to pursue. The race continued for a mile, without a murmur from the sufferer, though in addition to the agony of his body, he had the pain of seeing his enemies approach at every leap of their horses.

"Stop," he said, raising a feeble arm to check the speed of his companion;

"the Eagle of my tribe must spread his wings wider. Let him carry the white hairs of an old warrior into the burnt-wood village!"

Few words were necessary between men who were governed by the same feelings of glory, and who were so well trained in the principles of their romantic honour. The Swooping Eagle threw himself from the back of the horse and assisted the other to alight. The old man raised his tottering frame to its knees, and first casting a glance upwards at the countenance of his countryman, as if to bid him adieu, he stretched out his neck to the blow he himself invited. A few strokes of the tomahawk, with a circling gash from the knife, sufficed to sever the head from the less retued trunk. The Teton mounted again, just in season to escape a flight of arrows which came from his eager and disappointed pursuers. Flourishing the grim and bloody visage, he darted away from the spot with a shout of triumph, and

was seen scouring the plains, as though he were actually borne along on the wings of the powerful bird from whose qualities he had received his flattering name. The Swooping Eagle reached his village in safety. He was one of the few Siouxes who escaped from the massacre of that fatal day, and for a long time he alone of the saved was able to lift his voice again, in the councils of his nation, with undiminished confidence.

The knife and the lance cut short the retreat of the larger portion of the vanquished. Even the retiring party of the women and children were scattered by the conquerors, and the sun had long sunk behind the rolling outline of the western horizon before the fell business of that disastrous defeat was entirely ended.

CHAPTER VIII.

Which is the merchant here, and which the Jew?

THE day dawned, the following morning, on a more tranquil scene. The work of blood had entirely ceased, and as the sun arose, its light was shed on a broad expanse of quiet and solitude. The tents of Ishmael were still standing, where they had been last seen, but not another vestige of human existence could be traced in any other part of the waste. Here and there little flocks of ravenous birds were sailing and screaming above those spots where some heavy-footed Teton had met his death, but every other sign of the recent combat had passed away. The river was to be traced far

through the endless meadows, by its serpentine and smoking bed, and the little silvery clouds of light vapour, which hung above the pools and springs, were beginning to melt in air, as they felt the quickening warmth, which, pouring from the glowing sky, shed its bland and subtle influence on every object of the vast and unshadowed region. The prairie was like the heavens after the dark passage of the gust, soft, calm, and soothing.

It was in the midst of such a scene that the family of the squatter assembled to make their final decision concerning the several individuals who had been thrown into their power by the fluctuating chances of the incidents related. Every being possessing life and liberty had been afoot since the first streak of gray had lighted the east, and even the youngest of the erratic brood seemed deeply conscious that the moment had arrived, when circumstances were about to transpire that might leave a lasting

impression on the wild fortunes of their semi-barbarous condition.

Ishmael moved through his little encampment, with the seriousness of one who had been unexpectedly charged with matters of a gravity far exceeding any of the ordinary occurrences of his irregular existence. His sons, however, who had so often found occasions to prove the inexorable severity of their father's character, saw, in his sullen mien and cold eye, rather a determination to adhere to his resolutions, which usually were as obstinately enforced as they were harshly conceived, than any evidences of wavering or doubt. Even Esther was sensibly affected by the important matters that pressed so heavily on the interests of her family. While she neglected none of those domestic offices, which would probably have proceeded under any conceivable circumstances, just as the world turns round with earthquakes rending its crust, and

volcanoes consuming its vitals, yet her voice was pitched to a lower and more foreboding key than common, and the still frequent chidings of her children were tempered by something like the milder dignity of parental authority.

Abiram, as usual, seemed the one most given to solicitude and doubt. There were certain misgivings, in the frequent glances that he turned on the unyielding countenance of Ishmael, which might have betrayed how little of their former confidence and good-understanding existed between them. His looks appeared to be strangely vacillating between hope and fear. At times his countenance lighted with the gleamings of a sordid joy, as he bent his look on the tent which contained his recovered prisoner, and then, again, the impression seemed unaccountably chased away by the shadows of intense apprehension. When under the influence of the latter feeling, his eye never failed to seek the visage of his dull and impene-

trable kinsman. But there he rather found reason for alarm than grounds of encouragement, for the whole character of the squatter's countenance expressed the fearful truth, that he had redeemed his dull faculties from the influence of the kidnapper, and that his thoughts were now brooding only on the achievement of his own stubborn intentions.

It was in this state of things that the sons of Ishmael, in obedience to an order from their father, conducted the several subjects of his contemplated decisions from their places of confinement into the open air. No one was exempted from this arrangement. Middleton and Inez, Paul and Ellen, Obed and the trapper, were all brought forth and placed in situations that were deemed suitable to receive the sentence of their arbitrary judge. The younger children gathered around the spot, in a sort of momentary but engrossing curiosity, and even Esther quitted her culinary labours, and drew nigh to listen.

Hard-Heart alone of all his band was present to witness the novel and far from unimposing spectacle. He stood leaning, gravely, on his lance, while the smoking steed, that grazed nigh, showed that he had ridden far and hard to be a spectator on the occasion.

Ishmael had received his new ally with a coldness that showed his entire insensibility to that delicacy, which had induced the young chief to come alone, in order that the presence of his warriors might not create uneasiness or distrust. He neither courted their assistance nor dreaded their enmity, and he now proceeded to the business of the hour with as much composure, as though the species of patriarchal power, he actually wielded, was universally recognized.

There is something elevating in the possession of authority, however it may be abused. The mind is apt to make some efforts to prove the fitness between its qualities and the condition of its owner, though it may often fail, and

render that ridiculous which was only hated before. But the effect on Ishmael Bush was not so disheartening. Grave in exterior, saturnine by temperament, formidable by his physical means, and dangerous from his lawless obstinacy, his self-constituted tribunal excited a degree of awe, to which even the intelligent Middleton could not bring himself to be entirely insensible. Little time, however, was given to arrange his thoughts, for the squatter, though unaccustomed to haste, having previously made up his mind, was not disposed to waste the moments in delay. When he saw that all were in their places, he cast a dull look over his prisoners, and addressed himself to the Captain, as the principal man among the imaginary delinquents.

"I am called upon this day to fill the office which in the settlement you give unto judges, who are set apart to decide on matters that arise between man and man. I have but little knowledge of the

ways of the courts, though there is a rule that is known unto all, and which teaches, that an 'eye must be returned for an eye,' and 'a tooth for a tooth.' I am no troubler of county-houses, and least of all do I like living on a plantation that the sheriff has surveyed, yet there is a reason in such a law, that makes it a safe rule to journey by, and therefore it ar' a solemn fact that this day shall I abide by it, and give unto all and each that which is his due and no more."

When Ishmael had delivered his mind thus far, he paused and looked about him, as if he would trace the effects in the countenances of his hearers. When his eye met that of Middleton, he was answered by the latter—

"If the evil-doer is to be punished, and he that has offended none to be left to go at large, you must change situations with me, and become a prisoner instead of a judge."

"You mean to say that I have done

you wrong, in taking the lady from her father's house, and leading her so far against her will into these wild districts," returned the unmoved squatter, who manifested as little resentment as he betrayed compunction at the charge. "I shall not put the lie on the back of an evil deed, and deny your words. Since things have come to this pass between us, I have found time to think the matter over at my leisure, and though none of your swift thinkers, who can see, or who pretend to see into the nature of all things by a turn of the eye, yet am I a man open to reason, and give me my time, one who is not given to deny the truth. Therefore have I mainly concluded, that it was a mistake to take a child from its parent, and the lady shall be returned whence she has been brought as tenderly and as safely as man can do it,"

"Ay, ay," added Esther, "the man is right. Poverty and labour bore hard upon him, especially as county-officers

were getting troublesome, and in a weak moment he did the wicked act, but he has listened to my words, and his mind has got round again into its honest corner. An awful and a dangerous thing it is to be bringing the daughters of other people into a peaceable and well-governed family!"

"And who will thank you for the same, after what has been already done?" muttered Abiram, with a grin of disappointed cupidity, in which malignity and terror were disgustingly united; "when the devil has once made out his account, you may look for your receipt in full only at his hands."

"Peace!" said Ishmael, stretching his heavy hand towards his kinsman, in a manner that instantly silenced the speaker. "Your voice is like a raven's in my ears. If *you* had never spoken I should have been spared this shame."

"Since then you are beginning to lose sight of your errors, and to see the truth," said Middleton, "do not things

by halves, but, by the generosity of your conduct, purchase friends who may be of use in warding off any future danger from the law—"

"Young man," interrupted the squatter, with a dark frown, "*you*, too, have said enough. If fear of the law had come over me, you would not be here to witness the manner in which Ishmael Bush deals out justice."

"Smother not your good intentions, and remember, if you contemplate violence to any among us, that the arm of that law you affect to despise, reaches far, and that though its movements are sometimes slow, they are not the less certain!"

"Yes, there is too much truth in his words, squatter," said the trapper, whose attentive ears rarely suffered a syllable to be uttered unheeded in his presence. "A busy and a troublesome arm it often proves to be here, in this land of America; where, as they say, man is left greatly to the following of

his own wishes, compared to other countries; and happier, ay, and more manly and more honest, too, is he for the privilege! Why, do you know, my men, that there are regions where the law is so busy as to say, in this fashion shall you live, in that fashion shall you die, and in such another fashion shall you take leave of the world, to be sent before the judgment seat of the Lord! A wicked and a troublesome meddling is that, with the business of One who has not made his creatures to be herded, like oxen, and driven from field to field, as their stupid and selfish keepers may judge of their need and wants. A miserable land must that be, where they fetter the mind as well as the body, and where the creatures of God, being born children, are kept so by the wicked inventions of men, who would take upon themselves the office of the great Governor of all!"

During the delivery of this very pertinent opinion, Ishmael was content to

be silent, though the look, with which he regarded the speaker, manifested any other feeling than that of amity. When the old man was done, he turned to Middleton, and continued the subject which the other had interrupted.

"As to ourselves, young Captain, there has been wrong on both sides. If I have borne hard upon your feelings, in taking away your wife with an honest intention of giving her back to you, when the plans of that devil incarnate were answered, so have you broken into my encampment, aiding and abetting, as they have called many an honester bargain, in destroying my property."

"But what I did was to liberate—"

"The matter is settled between us," interrupted Ishmael, with the air of one who, having made up his own opinion on the merits of the question, cared very little for those of other people; "you and your wife are free to go and come, when and how you please. Abner, set the Captain at liberty; and now, if you

will tarry until I am ready to draw nigher to the settlements, you shall both have the benefit of carriage; if not, never say that you did not get a friendly offer."

"Now, may the strong oppress me, and my sins be visited harshly on my own head, if I forget your honesty, however slow it has been in showing itself," cried Middleton, hastening to the side of the weeping Inez, the instant he was released; "and, friend, I offer you the honour of a soldier, that your own part of this transaction shall be forgotten, whatever I may deem fit to have done, when I reach a place where the arm of government can make itself felt."

The dull smile, with which the squatter answered to this assurance, proved how little he valued the pledge that the youth, in the first revulsion of his feelings, was so free to make."

"Neither fear nor favour, but what I call justice, has brought me to this judgment," he said; "do you that which

may seem right in your eyes, and believe that the world is wide enough to hold us both, without our crossing each other's path again! If you ar' content, well; if you ar' not content, seek to ease your feelings in your own fashion. I shall not ask to be let up, when you once put me fairly down. And now, Doctor, have I come to your leaf in my accounts. It is time to foot up the small reckoning, that has been running on for some time atwixt us. With you, I entered into open and manly faith; in what manner have you kept it?"

The singular felicity with which Ishmael had contrived to shift the responsibility of all that had passed, from his own shoulders to those of his prisoners, backed as it was by circumstances that hardly admitted of a very philosophical examination of any mooted point in ethics, was sufficiently embarrassing to the several individuals, who were so unexpectedly required to answer for a conduct which, in their simplicity, they had

deemed so meritorious. The life of Obed had been so purely theoretic, that his amazement was not the least embarrassing at a state of things, which might not have proved so very remarkable had he been a little more practised in the ways of the world. The worthy naturalist was not the first, by many, who found himself, at the precise moment when he was expecting praise, suddenly arraigned to answer for the very conduct on which he rested all his claims to commendation. Though not a little scandalized, at the unexpected turn of the transaction, he was fain to make the best of circumstances, and to bring forth such matter in justification as first presented itself to his somewhat disordered faculties.

"That there did exist a certain compactum or agreement between Obed Batt, M. D., and Ishmael Bush, viator, or erratic husbandman," he said, endeavouring to avoid all offence in the use of

terms, "I am not disposed to deny. I will admit that it was therein conditioned, or stipulated, that a certain journey should be performed conjointly, or in company, until so many days had been numbered. But as the said time has fully expired, I presume it fair to infer that the bargain may now be said to be obsolete."

"Ishmael!" interrupted the impatient Esther, "make no words with a man who can break your bones as easily as set them, and let the poisoning devil go! He's a cheat from box to phial. Give him half the prairie and take the other half yourself. He an acclimator! I will engage to get the brats acclimated to a fever-and-agy bottom in a week, and not a word shall be uttered harder to pronounce than the bark of a cherry-tree, with perhaps a drop or two of western comfort. One thing ar' a fact, Ishmael; I like no fellow travellers who can give a heavy feel to an honest woman's tongue, I—and that without caring

whether her household is in order or out of order."

The air of settled gloom, which had taken possession of the squatter's countenance, lighted for an instant with a look of dull dullery as he answered—

"Different people might judge differently, Esther, of the virtue of the man's art. But sin' it is your wish to let him depart, I will not plough the prairie to make the walking rough. Friend, you are at liberty to go into the settlements, and there I would advise you to tarry, as men like me who make but few contracts do not relish the custom of breaking them so easily."

"And now, Ishmael," resumed his conquering wife, "in order to keep a quiet family and to smother all heart-burnings between us, show yonder red-skin and his daughter," pointing to the aged Le Balafré and the widowed Tachechana, "the way to their village, and let us say to them: God bless you and farewell in the same breath!"

"They are the captives of the Pawnee, according to the rules of Indian warfare, and I cannot meddle with his rights."

"Beware the dev l, my man! He's a cheat and a tempter, and none can say they ar' safe with his awful delusions before their eyes! Take the advice of one who has the honour of your name at heart, and send the tawny Jezebel away."

The squatter laid his broad hand on her shoulder, and looking her steadily in the eye, he answered, in tones that were both stern and solemn—

"Woman, we have that before us which calls our thoughts to other matters than the follies you mean. Remember what is to come, and put your silly jealousy to sleep."

"It is true, it is true," murmured his wife moving back among her daughters; "God forgive me that I should forget it!"

"And, now, young man; you, who have so often come into my clearing, under the pretence of lining the bee into

his hole," resumed Ishmael, after a momentary pause, as if to recover the equilibrium of his mind, "with you there is a heavier account to settle. Not satisfied with rummaging my camp, you have stolen a girl who is akin to my wife, and who I had calculated to make one day a daughter of my own."

A stronger sensation was produced by this than by any of the preceding interrogations. All the young men bent their curious eyes on Paul and Ellen, the former of whom seemed in no small mental confusion, while the latter bent her face on her bosom in shame.

"Harkee, friend Ishmael Bush," returned the bee-hunter, who found that he was expected to answer to the charge of burglary as well as to that of abduction; "that I did not give the most civil treatment to your pots and pails, I am not going to gainsay. If you will name the price you put upon the articles, it is possible the damage may be

quietly settled between us, and all hard feelings forgotten. I was not in a church-going humour when we got upon your rock, and it is more than probable there was quite as much kicking as preaching among your wares; but a hole in the best man's coat can be mended by money. As to the matter of Ellen Wade, here, it may not be got over so easily. Different people have different opinions on the subject of matrimony. Some think it is enough to say yes and no, to the questions of the magistrate, or of the parson, if one happens to be handy, in order to make a quiet house; but I think that where a young woman's mind is fairly bent on going in a certain direction, it will be quite as prudent to let her body follow. Not that I mean to say Ellen was not altogether forced to what she did, and therefore she is just as innocent, in this matter, as yonder jackass, who was made to carry her, and greatly against

his will, too, as I am ready to swear he would say himself, if he could speak as loud as he can bray."

"Nelly," resumed the squatter, who paid very little attention to what Paul considered a highly creditable and ingenious vindication; "Nelly, this is a wide and wicked world, on which you have been in such a hurry to cast yourself. You have fed and you have slept in my camp for a year, and I did hope that you had found the free air of the borders enough to your mind to wish to remain among us."

"Let the girl have her will," muttered Esther, from the rear; "he who might have persuaded her to stay, is sleeping in the cold and naked prairie, and little hope is left of changing her humour; besides, a woman's mind is a wilful thing, and not easily turned from its waywardness, as you know yourself, my man, or I should not be here the mother of your sons and daughters."

The squatter seemed reluctant to abandon his views on the abashed girl so easily, and before he answered to the suggestion of his wife, he turned his usual dull look along the line of the curious countenances of his boys, as if to see whether there was not one among them fit to fill the place of the deceased. Paul was not slow to observe the expression, and hitting nigher than usual on the secret thoughts of the other, he believed he had fallen on an expedient which might remove every difficulty.

"It is quite plain, friend Bush," he said, "that there are two opinions in this matter; yours for your sons, and mine for myself. I see but one amicable way of settling this dispute, which is as follows:—do you make a choice among your boys of any you will, and let us walk off together for the matter of a few miles into the prairies; the one who stays behind can never trouble any man's house or his fixen, and the one

who comes back may make the best of his way he can, in the good wishes of the young woman."

"Paul!" exclaimed the reproachful but smothered voice of Ellen.

"Never fear, Nelly," whispered the literal bee-hunter, whose straight-going mind suggested no other motive of uneasiness, on the part of his mistress, than concern for himself; "I have taken the measure of them all, and you may trust an eye that has seen to line so many a bee into his hole!"

"I am not about to set myself up as a ruler of inclinations," observed the squatter. "If the heart of the child is truly in the settlements, let her declare it; she shall have no let or hindrance from me. Speak, Nelly, and let what you say come from your wishes, without fear or favour. Would you leave us to go with this young man into the settled countries, or will you tarry and share the little we have to give, but which to you we give so freely?"

Thus called upon to decide, Ellen could no longer hesitate. The glance of her eye was at first timid and furtive; but as the colour flushed her features and her breathing became quick and excited, it was apparent that the native spirit of the girl was gaining the ascendancy over the bashfulness of sex.

"You took me a fatherless, impoverished and friendless orphan," she said, struggling to command her voice, "when others, who live in what may be called affluence compared to your state, chose to forget me; and may Heaven in its goodness bless you for it! The little I have done will never pay you for that one act of kindness. I like not your manner of life; it is different from the ways of my childhood, and it is different from my wishes; still had you not led this sweet and unoffending lady from her friends, I should never have quitted you, until you yourself had said, 'Go, and the blessing of God go with you!'"

"The act was not wise, but it is re-

pented of, and so far as it can be done, in safety, it shall be repaired. Now, speak freely; will you tarry, or will you go?"

"I have promised the lady," said Ellen, dropping her eyes again to the earth, "not to leave her; and after she has received so much wrong from our hands, she may have a right to claim that I keep my word."

"Take the cords from the young man," said Ishmael. When the order was obeyed, he motioned for all his sons to advance, and he placed them in a row before the eyes of Ellen. "Now let there be no trifling, but open your heart. Here ar' all I have to offer, besides a hearty welcome."

The distressed girl turned her abashed look from the countenance of one of the young men to that of another, until her eye met the troubled and working features of Paul. Then nature got the better of forms. She threw herself into

the arms of the bee-hunter, and sufficiently proclaimed her choice by sobbing aloud. Ishmael signed to his sons to fall back, and evidently mortified, though perhaps not disappointed by the result, he no longer hesitated.

"Take her," he said, "and deal honestly and kindly by her. The girl has that in her which should make her welcome in any man's house, and I should be loth to hear she ever came to harm. And now I have settled with you all on terms that I hope you will not find hard, but, on the contrary, just and manly. I have only another question to ask, and that is of the Captain; do you choose to profit by my teams in going into the settlements, or not?"

"I hear that some soldiers of my party are looking for me near the villages of the Pawnees," said Middleton, "and I intend to accompany this chief, in order to join my men."

"Then the sooner we part the better

Horses are plenty on the bottom. Go; make your choice, and leave us in peace."

"That is impossible, while the old man, who has been a friend of my family near half a century, is left a prisoner. What has he done, that he too is not released?"

"Ask no questions that may lead to deceitful answers," sullenly returned the squatter; "I have dealings of my own with that trapper that it may not befit an officer of the States to meddle with. Go, while your road is open."

"The man may be giving you honest council, and that which it concerns you all to hearken to," observed the old captive, who seemed in no uneasiness at the extraordinary condition in which he found himself. "The Siouxes are a numberless and bloody-minded race, and no one can say how long it may be afore they will be out again on the scent of revenge. Therefore I say to you, go, also, and take especial heed, in crossing the

bottoms, that you get not entangled again in the fires, for the honest hunters often burn the grass at this season, in order that the buffaloes may find a sweeter and a greener pasturage in the spring."

"I should forget not only my gratitude, but my duty to the laws, were I to leave this prisoner in your hands, even by his own consent, without knowing the nature of his crime, in which we may have all been his innocent accessaries."

"Will it satisfy you to know, that he merits all he will receive?"

"It will at least change my opinion of his character."

"Look then at this," said Ishmael, placing before the eyes of the Captain the bullet that had been found about the person of the dead Asa; "with this morsel of lead did he lay low as fine a boy as ever gave joy to a parent's eyes!"

"I cannot believe that he has done this deed, unless in self-defence, or on

some justifiable provocation. That he knew of the death of your son, I confess, for he pointed out the brake in which the body lay; but that he has wrongfully taken his life, nothing but his own acknowledgment shall persuade me to believe."

"I have lived long," commenced the trapper, who found, by the general pause, that he was expected to vindicate himself from the heavy imputation, "and much evil have I seen in my day. Many are the prowling bears and leaping panthers that I have met, fighting for the morsel which has been thrown in their way, and many are the reasoning men, that I have looked on striving against each other unto death, in order that human madness might also have its hour. For myself, I hope, there is no boasting in saying, that though my hand has been needed in putting down wickedness and oppression, it has never struck a blow of which its owner will

be ashamed to hear at a reckoning that shall be far mightier than this."

"If my father has taken life from one of his tribe," said the young Pawnee, whose quick eye had read the meaning of what was passing, in the bullet and in the countenances of the others, "let him give himself up to the friends of the dead, like a warrior. He is too just to need thongs to lead him to judgment."

"Boy, I hope you do me justice. If I had done the foul deed, with which they charge me, I should have manhood enough to come and offer my head to the blow of punishment, as all good and honest red-men do the same." Then giving his anxious Indian friend a look, to reassure him of his innocence, he turned to the rest of his attentive and interested listeners, as he continued in English, "I have a short story to tell, and he that believes it will believe the truth, and he that disbelieves it will only lead himself astray, and perhaps his

neighbour too. We were all outlying about your camp, friend squatter, as by this time you may begin to suspect, when we found that it contained a wronged and imprisoned lady, with intentions neither more honest nor dishonest than to set her free, as in nature and justice she had a right to be. Seeing that I was more skilled in scouting than the others, while they lay back in the cover, I was sent upon the plain on the business of the reconnoitrings. You little thought that one was so nigh, who saw into all the circumventions of your hunt, but there was I, sometimes flat behind a bush or a tuft of grass, sometimes rolling down a hill into a bottom, and little did you dream that your motions were watched, as the panther watches the drinking deer. Lord, squatter, when I was a man in the pride and strength of my days, I have looked in at the tent door of the enemy, and they sleeping, ay, and dreaming too of being at home and in

peace! I wish there was time to give you thepartic—"

"Proceed with your explanation," interrupted the impatient Middleton.

"Ah! and a bloody and wicked sight it was! There I lay in a low bed of grass, as two of the hunters came nigh each other. Their meeting was not cordial, nor such as men, who meet in a desert, should give each other; but I thought they would have parted in peace, until I saw one put his rifle to the other's back and do what I call a treacherous and sinful murder. It was a noble and a manly youth, that boy! Though the powder burnt his coat he stood the shock for more than a minute before he fell. Then was he brought to his knees and a desperate and manful fight he made to the brake, like a wounded bear seeking a cover!"

"And why, in the name of heavenly justice, did you conceal this?" cried Middleton.

"What! think you, Captain, that a man, who has spent more than three-score years in the wilderness, has not learned the virtue of discretion? What red warrior runs to tell the sights he has seen until a fitting time? I took the Doctor to the place, in order to see whether his skill might not come in use, and our friend the bee-hunter, being in company, was knowing to the fact that the bushes held the body."

"Ay; it ar' true," said Paul; "but not knowing what private reason might make the old trapper wish to hush the matter up, I said as little about the thing as possible; which was just nothing at all."

"And who was the perpetrator of this deed?" demanded Middleton.

"If by perpetrator you mean him who did the act, yonder stands the man; and a shame and a disgrace is it to our race, that he is of the blood and family of the dead."

"He lies! he lies!" shrieked Abiram.

" I did no murder; I gave but blow for blow."

The voice of Ishmael was deep and even awful, as he answered—

" It is enough. Let the old man go. Boys, put the brother of your mother in his place."

"Touch me not!" cried Abiram, " I'll call on God to curse ye if you touch me!"

The wild and disordered gleam of his eye at first induced the young men to arrest their steps; but when Abner, older and more resolute than the rest, advanced full upon him, with a countenance that bespoke the hostile state of his mind, the affrighted criminal turned, and making an abortive effort to fly, fell with his face to the earth, to all appearance perfectly dead. Amid the low exclamations of horror which succeeded, Ishmael made a gesture which commanded his sons to bear the body into a tent.

" Now,' he said, turning to those who were strangers in his camp, " nothing is

left to be done, but for each to go his own road. I wish you all well; and to you, Ellen, though you may not prize the gift, I say, God bless you!"

Middleton, awe-struck by what he believed a manifest judgment of Heaven, made no further resistance, but prepared to depart. The arrangements were brief and soon completed. When they were all ready, they took a short and silent leave of the squatter and his family, and then the whole of the singularly constituted party was seen slowly and silently following the victorious Pawnee, towards his distant villages.

CHAPTER IX.

> And I beseech you,
> Wrest once the law to your authority;
> To do a great right, do a little wrong.
>
> SHAKSPEARE.

ISHMAEL awaited long and patiently for the motley train of Hard-Heart to disappear. When his scout reported that the last straggler of the Indians, who had joined their chief so soon as he was at such a distance from the encampment as to excite no jealousy by their numbers, had gone behind the most distant swell of the prairie, he gave forth the order to strike his tents. The cattle were already in the gears, and the moveables were soon transferred to their usual places in the different vehicles. When all these arrangements were com-

pleted, the little waggon, which had so long been the tenement of Inez, was drawn before the tent, into which the insensible body of the kidnapper had been borne, and preparations were evidently made for the reception of another prisoner. Then it was, as Abiram appeared, pale, terrified, and tottering beneath a load of detected guilt, that the younger members of the family were first apprised that he still belonged to the class of the living. A general and superstitious impression had spread among them that his crime had been visited by a terrible retribution from Heaven, and they now gazed at him, as at a being who belonged rather to another world, than as a mortal, who like themselves had still to endure the last agony, before the great link of human existence could be broken. The criminal himself appeared to be in a state in which the most sensitive and startling terror was singularly combined with total physical apathy. The truth was, that while his person had been

numbed by the shock, his susceptibility to apprehension kept his agitated mind in unrelieved distress. When he found himself in the open air, he looked about him, in order to gather, if possible, some evidences of his future fate from the countenances of those who were gathered round. Seeing every where grave but composed features, and meeting in no eye any expression that threatened immediate violence, the miserable man began to revive, and, by the time he was seated in the waggon, his artful faculties were beginning to plot the expedients of parrying the just resentment of his kinsmen, or, if these should fail him, the means of escaping from a punishment that his forebodings told him would be terrible.

Throughout the whole of these preparations Ishmael had rarely spoken. A gesture, or a glance of the eye, had served to indicate his pleasure to his sons, and with these simple methods of communication, all parties appeared perfectly

content. When the signal was made to proceed, the squatter threw his rifle into the hollow of his arm, and his axe across his shoulder, taking the lead as usual. Esther had buried herself in the waggon which contained her daughters; the young men took their customary places among the cattle, or nigh the teams, and the whole proceeded at their ordinary dull, but unremitted gait.

For the first time in many a day, the squatter turned his back towards the setting sun. The route he held was in the direction of the settled country, and the manner in which he moved sufficed to tell his children, who had learned to read their father's determinations in his mien, that their journey on the prairie was shortly to have an end. Still nothing else transpired for hours, that might denote the existence of any sudden or violent revolution in the purposes or feelings of Ishmael. During all that time he marched alone, keeping a few hundred rods in front of his teams, sel-

dom giving any sign of extraordinary excitement. Once or twice, indeed, his huge figure was seen standing on the summit of some distant swell, with the head bent towards the earth, as he leaned on his rifle; but then these moments of intense thought were rare and of short continuance. The train had long thrown its shadows towards the east before any material alteration was made in the disposition of their march. Water-courses were waded, plains were passed, and rolling ascents risen and descended, without producing the smallest change. Long practised in the difficulties of that peculiar species of travelling in which he was engaged, the squatter avoided the more impracticable obstacles of their route by a sort of instinct, invariably inclining to the right or left in season, as the formation of the land, the presence of trees, or the signs of rivers forewarned him of the necessity of such movements.

At length the hour arrived when charity to man and beast required a tem-

porary suspension of labour. Ishmael chose the required spot with all his customary sagacity. The regular formation of the country, such as it has been described in the earlier pages of our book, had long been interrupted by a more unequal and broken surface. There were, it is true, in general, the same wide and empty wastes, the same rich and extensive bottoms, and that wild and singular combination of swelling fields and of nakedness, which gives that region the appearance of an ancient country, incomprehensibly stripped of its people and their dwellings. But these distinguishing features of the rolling prairies had long been interrupted by irregular hillocks, occasional masses of rock, and broad belts of forest.

Ishmael chose a spring, that broke out of the base of a rock some forty or fifty feet in elevation, as a place well suited to the wants of his herds. The water moistened a small swale that lay beneath the spot, which yielded, in return for the

fecund gift, a scanty growth of grass. A solitary willow had taken root in the alluvion, and profiting by its exclusive possession of the soil, the tree had sent up its stem far above the crest of the adjacent rock, whose peaked summit had once been shadowed by its branches. But its loveliness had gone with the mysterious principle of life. As if in mockery of the meagre show of verdure that the spot exhibited, it remained a noble and solemn monument of former fertility. The larger, ragged, and fantastic branches still obtruded themselves abroad, while the white and hoary trunk stood naked and tempest-riven. Not a leaf, nor a sign of vegetation was to be seen about it. In all things it proclaimed the frailty of existence and the fulfilment of time.

Here Ishmael, after making the customary signal for the train to approach, threw his vast frame upon the earth, and seemed to muse on the deep responsibility of his present situation. His sons

were not long in arriving, for the cattle no sooner scented the food and water than they quickened their pace, and then succeeded the usual bustle and avocations of a halt.

The impression made by the scene of that morning was not so deep or lasting on the children of Ishmael and Esther, as to induce them to forget the wants of nature. But while the sons were searching among their stores for something substantial to appease their hunger, and the younger fry were wrangling about their simple dishes, the parents of the unnurtured family were far differently employed.

When the squatter saw that all, even to the reviving Abiram, were busy in administering to their appetites, he gave his downcast partner a glance of his eye, and withdrew towards a distant roll of the land, which bounded the view towards the east. The meeting of the pair, in this naked spot, was like an interview held above the grave of their

murdered son. Ishmael signed to his wife to take a seat beside him on a fragment of rock, and then followed a space, during which neither seemed disposed to speak.

"We have journeyed together long, through good and bad," Ishmael at length commenced: "much have we had to try us, and some bitter cups have we been made to swallow, my woman, but nothing like this has ever before lain in my path."

"It is a heavy cross for a poor, misguided, and sinful woman to bear!" returned Esther, bowing her head to her knees, and partly concealing her face in her dress. "A heavy and a burthensome weight is this to be laid upon the shoulders of a sister and a mother!"

"Ay; therein lies the hardship of the case. I had brought my mind to the punishment of that houseless trapper, with no great strivings, for the man had done me few favours, and God forgive me if I suspected him wrongfully of

much evil! This is, however, bringing shame in at one door of my cabin, in order to drive it out at the other. But shall a son of mine be murdered, and he who did it go at large?—the boy would never rest!"

"Oh, Ishmael, we pushed the matter far! Had little been said, who would have been the wiser? Our consciences might then have been quiet."

"Eest'er," said the husband, turning on her a reproachful but still a dull regard, "the hour has been, my woman, when you thought another hand had done this wickedness?"

"I did, I did! the Lord gave me the feeling, as a punishment for my sins! but his mercy was not slow in lifting the veil; I looked into the book, Ishmael, and there I found the words of comfort."

"Have you that book at hand, woman; it may happen to advise in such a dreary business?"

Esther fumbled in her pocket and was not long in producing the fragment of a bible, which had been thumbed and smoke-dried till the print was nearly illegible. It was the only article, in the nature of a book, that was to be found among the chattels of the squatter, and it had been preserved by his wife, as a melancholy relic of more prosperous, and possibly of more innocent days. She had long been in the habit of resorting to it, under the pressure of such circumstances as were palpably beyond human redress, though her spirit and resolution rarely needed support under those that admitted of reparation through any of the ordinary means of reprisal. In this manner Esther had made a sort of convenient ally of the word of God: rarely troubling it for council, however, except when her own incompetency to avert an evil was too apparent to be disputed. We shall leave casuists to determine

how far she resembled any other believers in this particular, and proceed directly with the matter before us.

"There are many awful passages in these pages, Ishmael," she said, when the volume was opened, and the leaves were slowly turning under her finger, "and some there ar that teach the rules of punishment."

Her husband made a gesture for her to find one of those brief rules of conduct, which have been received among all Christian nations as the direct mandates of the Creator, and which have been found so just, that even they, who deny their high authority, admit their wisdom. Ishmael listened with grave attention, as his companion read all those verses, which her memory suggested, and which were thought applicable to the situation in which they found themselves. He made her show him the words, which he regarded with a sort of strange reverence. A resolution once taken was usually irrevocable,

in one who was moved with so much difficulty. He put his hand upon the book, and closed the pages himself, as much as to apprise his wife that he was satisfied. Esther, who so well knew his character, trembled at the action, and casting a glance at his steady but contracting eye, she said—

"And yet, Ishmael, my blood, and the blood of my children is in his veins! cannot mercy be shown?"

"Woman," he answered sternly, "when we believed that miserable old trapper had done this deed, nothing was said of mercy!"

Esther made no reply, but folding her arms upon her breast, she sat silent and thoughtful for many minutes. Then she once more turned her anxious gaze upon the countenance of her husband, where she found all passion and care apparently buried in the coldest apathy. Satisfied now that the fate of her brother was sealed, and possibly conscious how well he merited the punishment

that was meditated, she no longer thought of mediation. No more words passed between them. Their eyes met for an instant, and then both arose and walked in profound silence towards the encampment.

The squatter found his children expecting his return, in the usual listless manner with which they awaited all coming events. The cattle were already herded, and the horses in their gears, in readiness to proceed as soon as he should indicate that such was his pleasure. The children were already in their proper vehicle, and, in short, nothing delayed the departure but the absence of the parents of the wild brood.

" Abner," said the father, with the deliberation with which all his proceedings were characterized, " take the brother of your mother from the waggon, and let him stand the 'arth."

Abiram issued from his place of con-

cealment, trembling, it is true, but far from destitute of hopes, as to his final success in appeasing the just resentment of his kinsman. After throwing a glance around him, with the vain wish of finding a single countenance in which he might detect a solitary gleam of sympathy, he endeavoured to smother those apprehensions, that were by this time reviving in all their original violence, by forcing a sort of friendly communication between himself and the squatter—

"The beasts are getting jaded, brother," he said; "and as we have made so good a march already, is it not time to 'camp? To my eye you may go far, before a better place than this is found to pass the night in."

"'Tis well you like it. Your tarry here ar' likely to be long. My sons, draw nigh and listen. Abiram White," he added, lifting his cap, and speaking with a solemnity and steadiness, that rendered even his dull mien imposing,

"you have slain my first-born, and according to the laws of God and man must you die!"

The kidnapper started at this terrible and sudden sentence, with the terror that one would exhibit who unexpectedly found himself in the grasp of a monster, from whose power there was no retreat. Although filled with the most serious forebodings of what might be his lot, his courage had not been equal to look his danger in the face, and with the deceitful consolation, with which timid tempers are apt to conceal their desperate condition from themselves, he had rather courted a treacherous relief in his cunning, than prepared himself for the worst.

"Die!" he repeated, in a voice that scarcely issued from his chest; "a man is surely safe among his friends!"

"So thought my boy," returned the squatter, motioning for the team, that contained his wife and the girls, to proceed, as he very coolly examined the

priming of his piece. "By the rifle did you destroy my son, and it is fit and just that you meet your end by the same weapon."

Abiram stared about him with a gaze that, for the moment, bespoke an unsettled reason. He even laughed, as if he would not only persuade himself but others that what he heard was some pleasantry, intended to try his nerves. But no where did his frightful merriment meet with an answering echo. All around was solemn and still. The visages of his nephews were excited, but cold towards him, and that of his former confederate frightfully determined. This very steadiness of mien was a thousand times more alarming and hopeless than any violence could have proved. The latter might possibly have touched his spirit and awakened resistance, but the former threw him entirely on the feeble resources of himself.

"Brother," he said, in a hurried, unnatural whisper, "did I hear you?"

"My words are plain, Abiram White; you have done murder, and for the same must you die!"

"Where is Esther? Sister, sister, will you leave me? Oh! Sister! do you hear my call?"

"I hear one speak from the grave!" returned the husky tones of Esther, as the waggon passed the spot where the criminal stood. "It is the voice of my first-born, calling aloud for justice! God have mercy, God have mercy on your soul!"

The team slowly pursued its route, and the deserted Abiram now found himself deprived of the smallest vestige of hope. Still he could not summon fortitude to meet his death, and had not his limbs refused to aid him, he would yet have attempted to fly. Then, by a sudden revolution from hope to utter despair, he fell upon his knees, and commenced a prayer, in which cries for mercy to God and to his kinsman were wildly and blasphemously mingled.

The sons of Ishmael turned away in horror at the disgusting spectacle, and even the stern nature of the squatter began to bend before such abject misery.

"May that which you ask of Him, be granted," he said; "but a father can never forget a murdered child."

He was answered by the most humble appeals for time. A week, a day, an hour, were each implored, with an earnestness commensurate to the value they receive, when a whole life is compressed into their short duration. The squatter was troubled, and at length he yielded in part to the petitions of the criminal. His final purpose was not altered, though he changed the means. "Abner," he said, "mount the rock and look on every side, that we may be sure none are nigh."

While his nephew was obeying this order, gleams of reviving hope were seen shooting across the quivering features of the kidnapper. The report was favourable; nothing having life, the retiring

teams excepted, was to be seen. A messenger was, however, coming from the latter, in great apparent haste. Ishmael awaited its arrival. He received from the hands of one of his wondering and affrighted girls a fragment of that book, which Esther had preserved with so much care. The squatter beckoned the child away, and placed the leaves in the hands of the criminal.

"Eest'er has sent you this," he said, "that, in your last moments, you may remember God."

"Bless her, bless her! a good and kind sister has she been to me! But time must be given, that I may read; time, my brother, time!"

"Time shall not be wanting. You shall be your own executioner, and this miserable office shall pass away from my hands."

Ishmael proceeded to put his new resolution in force. The immediate apprehensions of the kidnapper were quieted, by an assurance that he might yet live

for days, though his punishment was inevitable. A reprieve, to one as abject and wretched as Abiram, temporarily produced the same effects as a pardon. He was even foremost in assisting in the appalling arrangements, and of all the actors in that solemn tragedy, his voice alone was facetious and jocular.

A thin shelf of the rock projected beneath one of the ragged arms of the willow. It was many feet from the ground, and admirably adapted to the purpose which, in fact, its appearance had suggested. On this little platform was the criminal placed, his arms bound at the elbows behind his back, beyond the possibility of liberation, with a proper cord leading from his neck to the limb of the tree. The latter was so placed, that when suspended the body could find no foot-hold. The fragment of the Bible was placed in his hands, and he was there left to seek his consolation as he might from its pages.

" And now, Abiram White," said the squatter, when his sons had descended from completing this arrangement, " I give you a last and solemn asking. Death is before you in two shapes. With this rifle can your misery be cut short, or by that cord, sooner or later, must you meet your end."

" Let me yet live! Oh, Ishmael, you know not how sweet life is, when the last moment draws so nigh!"

" 'Tis done," said the squatter, motioning for his assistants to follow the herds and teams. " And now, miserable man, that it may prove a consolation to your end, I forgive you my wrongs and leave you to your God."

Ishmael then turned and pursued his way across the plain at his ordinary sluggish and ponderous gait. Though his head was bent a little towards the earth, his inactive mind did not prompt him to cast a look behind. Once, indeed, he thought he heard his name

called, in tones that were a little smothered, but they failed to make him pause.

At the spot where he and Esther had conferred, he reached the boundary of the visible horizon from the rock. Here he stopped, and ventured a glance in the direction of the place he had just quitted. The sun was near dipping into the plains beyond, and its last rays lighted the naked branches of the willow. He saw the ragged outline of the whole drawn against the glowing heavens, and he even traced the still upright form of the being he had left to his misery. Turning the roll of the swell, he proceeded with the feelings of one who had been suddenly and violently separated from a recent confederate, for ever.

Within a mile the squatter overtook his teams. His sons had found a place suited to the encampment for the night, and merely awaited his approach to confirm their choice. Few words were necessary to express his acquiescence.

Every thing passed in a silence more general and remarkable than ever. The chidings of Esther were not heard among her young, or if heard, they were more in the tones of softened admonition than in her usual upbraiding key.

No questions nor explanations passed between the husband and his wife. It was only as the latter was about to withdraw among her children, for the night, that the former saw her taking a furtive look at the pan of his rifle. Ishmael bade his sons seek their rest, announcing his intention to look to the safety of the camp in person. When all was still, he walked out upon the prairie, with a sort of sensation that he found his breathing among the tents too straightened. The night was well adapted to heighten the feelings which had been created by the events of the day.

The wind had risen with the moon, and it was occasionally sweeping over the plain, in a manner that made it not difficult for the sentinel to imagine that

strange and unearthly sounds were mingling in the blast. Yielding to the extraordinary impulse of which he was the subject, he cast a glance around to see that all were slumbering in security, and then he strayed towards the swell of land already mentioned. Here the squatter found himself at a point that commanded a view to the east and to the west. Light fleecy clouds were driving before the moon, which was cold and watery, though there were moments, when its placid rays were shed from clear blue fields, seeming to soften objects to its own mild loveliness.

For the first time, in a life of so much wild adventure, Ishmael felt a keen sense of solitude. The naked prairies began to assume the forms of illimitable and dreary wastes, and the rushing of the wind sounded like the whisperings of the dead. It was not long before he thought a shriek was borne past him on a blast. It did not sound like a call from earth, but it swept frightfully

through the upper air, mingled with the hoarse accompaniment of the wind. The teeth of the squatter were compressed, and his huge hand grasped the rifle, as though it would crush the metal like paper. Then came a lull, a fresher blast, and a cry of horror that seemed to have been uttered at the very portals of his ears. A sort of echo burst involuntarily from his own lips, as men will often shout under unnatural excitement, and throwing his rifle across his shoulder, he proceeded towards the rock with the strides of a giant.

It was not often that the blood of Ishmael moved at the rate with which the fluid circulates in the veins of ordinary men; but now he felt it ready to gush from every pore in his body. The animal was aroused in his most latent energies. Ever as he advanced he heard those shrieks, which sometimes seemed ringing among the clouds, and sometimes passed so nigh as to appear to brush the earth. At length there came

a cry, in which there could be no delusion, or to which the imagination could lend no horror. It appeared to fill each cranny of the air, as the visible horizon is often charged to fulness by one dazzling flash of the electric fluid. The name of God was distinctly audible, but it was awfully and blasphemously blended with sounds that may not be repeated. The squatter stopped, and for a moment he covered his ears with his hands. When he withdrew the latter, a low and husky voice at his elbow asked, in smothered tones—

"Ishmael, my man, heard ye nothing?"

"Hist!" returned the husband, laying a powerful arm on Esther, without manifesting the smallest surprise at the unlooked-for presence of his wife. "Hist, woman! if you have the fear of Heaven, be still!"

A profound silence succeeded. Though the wind rose and fell as before, its rushing was no longer mingled with those

fearful cries. The sounds were imposing and solemn, but it was the solemnity and majesty of nature in its solitude."

"Let us go on," said Esther, "all is hushed."

"Woman, what has brought you here?" demanded her husband, whose blood had returned into its former channels, and whose thoughts had already lost a portion of their excitement.

"Ishmael, he murdered our first-born; but it is not meet that the son of my mother should lie upon the ground like the carrion of a dog!"

"Follow," returned the squatter, again grasping his rifle, and striding towards the rock. The distance was still considerable, and their approach, as they drew nigh the place of execution, was moderated by awe. Many minutes had passed, before they reached a spot where they might distinguish the outlines of the dusky objects.

"Where have you put the body?" whispered Esther. "See, here are

pick and spade, that a brother of mine may sleep in the bosom of the earth!"

The moon broke from behind a mass of clouds, and the eye of the woman was enabled to follow the finger of Ishmael. It pointed to a human form swinging in the wind, beneath the ragged and shining arm of the willow. Esther bent her head and veiled her eyes from the sight. But Ishmael drew nigher, and long contemplated his work in awe, though not in compunction. The leaves of the sacred book were scattered on the ground, and even a fragment of the shelf had been displaced by the kidnapper in his agony. But all was now in the stillness of death. The grim and convulsed countenance of the victim was at times brought full into the light of the moon, and again as the wind lulled, the fatal rope drew a dark line across its bright disk. The squatter raised his rifle, with extreme care, and fired. The cord was cut, and the body

came lumbering to the earth, a heavy and insensible mass.

Until now, Esther had not moved nor spoken. But her hand was not slow to assist in the labour of the hour. The grave was soon dug. It was instantly made to receive its miserable tenant. As the lifeless form descended, Esther, who sustained the head, looked up into the face of her husband with an expression of anguish, and said—

"Ishmael, my man, it is very terrible! I cannot kiss the corpse of my father's child!"

The squatter laid his broad hand on the bosom of the dead, and said—

"Abiram White, we all have need of mercy; from my soul do I forgive you! may God in Heaven have pity on your sins!"

The woman bowed her face, and imprinted her lips long and fervently on the pallid forehead of her brother. After this came the falling clods and all the

solemn sounds of filling a grave. Esther lingered on her knees, and Ishmael stood uncovered while the woman muttered a prayer. All was then finished.

On the following morning the teams and herds of the squatter were seen pursuing their course towards the settlements. As they approached the confines of society, the train was blended among a thousand others. Though some of the numerous descendants of this peculiar pair were reclaimed from their lawless and semi-barbarous lives, the principals of the family, themselves, were never heard of more.

CHAPTER X.

——No leave take I, for I will ride,
As far as land will let me, by your side.

SHAKSPEARE.

The passage of the Pawnee to his village was interrupted by no such scene of violence. His vengeance had been as complete as it was summary. Not even a solitary scout of the Siouxes was left on the hunting grounds he was obliged to traverse, and of course the journey of Middleton's party was as peaceful as though it were made in the bosom of the States. The marches were timed to meet the weakness of the females. In short, the victors seemed to have lost every trace of ferocity with their success, and appeared disposed to

consult the most trifling of the wants of that engrossing people who were daily encroaching on their rights, and reducing the red-men of the west from their state of proud independence to the condition of fugitives and wanderers.

Our limits will not permit a detail of the triumphal entry of the conquerors. The exultation of the tribe was proportioned to its previous despondency. Mothers boasted of the honourable deaths of their sons; wives proclaimed the honour and pointed to the scars of their husbands; and Indian girls rewarded the young braves with their songs of triumph. The trophies of their fallen enemies were exhibited, as conquered standards are displayed in more civilized regions. The deeds of former warriors were recounted by the aged men, and declared to be eclipsed by the glory of this victory. While Hard-Heart himself, so distinguished for his exploits from boyhood to that hour, was unanimously proclaimed and re-proclaimed

the worthiest chief and the stoutest brave that the Wahcondah had ever bestowed on his most favoured children, the Pawnees of the Loup.

Notwithstanding the comparative security in which Middleton found his recovered treasure, he was not sorry to see his faithful and sturdy artillerists standing among the throng as he entered in the wild train, and lifting their voices in a martial shout to greet his return. The presence of this force, small as it was, removed every shadow of uneasiness from his mind. It made him master of his movements, gave him dignity and importance in the eyes of his new friends, and would enable him to overcome the difficulties of the wide region which still lay between the village of the Pawnees and the nearest fortress of his countrymen. A lodge was yielded to the exclusive possession of Inez and Ellen; and even Paul, when he saw an armed sentinel, in the uniform of the States, pacing before its entrance, was

content to stray among the dwellings of the 'Red-skins,' prying with but little reserve into their domestic economy, commenting sometimes jocularly, sometimes gravely, and always freely, on their different expedients, or endeavouring to make the wondering housewives comprehend his quaint explanations of what he conceived to be the better customs of the whites.

This inquiring and troublesome spirit found no imitators among the Indians. The delicacy and reserve of Hard-Heart were communicated to his people. When every attention that could be suggested by their simple manners and narrow wants had been fulfilled, no intrusive foot presumed to approach the cabins that had been devoted to the service of the strangers. They were left to seek their repose in that manner which most comported with their habits and inclinations. The songs and rejoicings of the tribe, however, ran far into the night, during the deepest hours of which, the

voice of more than one warrior was heard, recounting, from the top of his lodge, the deeds of his people and the glory of their triumphs.

Every thing having life, notwithstanding the excesses of the night, was abroad with the appearance of the sun. The expression of exultation, which had so lately been seen on every countenance, was now changed to one better suited to the feeling of the moment. It was understood by all, that the Pale-faces, who had befriended their chief, were about to take their final leave of the tribe. The soldiers of Middleton, in anticipation of his arrival, had bargained with an unsuccessful trader for the use of his boat, which lay in the stream ready to receive its cargo, and nothing remained to complete the arrangements for the long journey.

Middleton did not see this moment arrive entirely without distrust. The admiration with which Hard-Heart had regarded Inez, had not escaped his jea-

lous eye, any more than had the lawless wishes of Mahtoree. He knew the consummate manner in which a savage could conceal his designs, and he felt that it would be a culpable weakness to be unprepared for the worst. Secret instructions were therefore given to his men, while the preparations they made were properly masked behind the show of military parade with which it was intended to signalize their departure.

The conscience of the young soldier reproached him, when he saw the whole tribe accompanying his party to the margin of the stream, with unarmed hands and sorrowful countenances. They gathered in a circle around the strangers and their chief, and became not only peaceful, but highly interested observers of what was passing. As it was evident that Hard-Heart intended to speak, the former stopped, and manifested their readiness to listen, the trapper performing the office of interpreter. Then the young chief addressed his people in the

usual metaphorical language of an Indian. He commenced by alluding to the antiquity and renown of his own nation. He spoke of their successes in the hunts and on the war-path; of the manner in which they had always known how to defend their rights and to chastise their enemies. After he had said enough to manifest his respect for the greatness of the Loups, and to satisfy the pride of the listeners, he made a sudden transition to the race of whom the strangers were members. He compared their countless numbers to the flights of migratory birds in the season of blossoms or in the fall of the year. With a delicacy, that none knew better how to practice than an Indian warrior, he made no direct mention of the rapacious temper, that so many of them had betrayed in their dealings with the redmen. Feeling that the sentiment of distrust was strongly engrafted in the tempers of his tribe, he rather endeavoured to soothe any just resentment

they might entertain, by indirect excuses and apologies. He reminded the listeners that even the Pawnee Loups had been obliged to chase many unworthy individuals from their villages. The Wahcondah sometimes veiled his countenance from a red-man. No doubt the great Spirit of the Pale-faces often looked darkly on his children. Such as were abandoned to the worker of evil could never be brave or virtuous, let the colour of the skin be what it might. He bade his young men to look at the hands of the Big-knives. They were not empty, like those of hungry beggars, neither were they filled with goods, like those of knavish traders. They were, like themselves, warriors, and they carried arms which they knew well how to use—they were worthy to be called brothers!

Then he directed the attention of all to the chief of the strangers. He was a son of their great white father. He had not come upon the prairies to frighten the

buffaloes from their pastures, or to seek the game of the Indians. Wicked men had robbed him of one of his wives; no doubt she was the most obedient, the meekest, the loveliest of them all. They had only to open their eyes to see that his words must be true. Now, that the white chief had found his wife, he was about to return to his own people in peace. He would tell them that the Pawnees were just, and there would be a line of wampum between the two nations. Let all his people wish the strangers a safe return to their towns. The warriors of the Loups knew both how to receive their enemies, and how to clear the briars from the path of their friends.

The heart of Middleton had beat quick, as the young partizan alluded to the charms of Inez, and, for an instant, he cast an impatient glance at his little line of artillerists; but the chief, from that moment, appeared to forget he had ever seen so fair a being. His feelings, if he had any on the subject, were veiled

behind the cold mask of Indian self-denial. He took each warrior by the hand, not forgetting the meanest soldier; but his cold and collected eye never wandered for an instant towards either of the females. Arrangements had been made for their comfort, with a prodigality and care that had not failed to excite some surprise in his young men, but in no other particular did he shock their manly pride by betraying any solicitude in behalf of the weaker sex.

The leave-taking was general and imposing. Each male Pawnee was sedulous to omit no one of the strange warriors in his attentions, and, of course, the ceremony occupied some time. The only exception, and that was not general, was in the case of Dr. Battius. Not a few of the young men, it is true, were indifferent about lavishing civilities on one of so doubtful a profession, but the worthy naturalist found some consolation in the more matured politeness of the old men, who had inferred, that

though not of much use in war, the medicine of the Big-knives might possibly be made serviceable in peace.

When all of Middleton's party had embarked, the trapper lifted a small bundle which had lain at his feet during the previous proceedings, and whistling Hector to his side, he was the last to take his seat. The artillerists gave the usual cheers, which were answered by a shout from the tribe, and then the boat was shoved into the current, and began to glide swiftly down its stream.

A long and a musing, if not a melancholy silence succeeded this departure. It was first broken by the trapper, whose regret was not the least visible in his dejected and sorrowful eye.

"They are a valiant and an honest tribe," he said, "that will I say boldly in their favour; and second only do I take them to be to that once mighty but now scattered people, the Delawares of the Hills. Ah's me! Captain, if you had seen as much good and evil as I

have seen in these nations of Red-skins, you would know of how much value was a brave and simple-minded warrior. I know that some are to be found, who both think and say that an Indian is but a little better than the beasts of these naked plains. But it is needful to be honest in one's self, to be a fitting judge of honesty in others. No doubt, no doubt, they know their enemies, and little do they care to show to such any great confidence or love."

"It is the way of man," returned the Captain, "and it is probable they are not wanting in any of his natural qualities."

"No, no; it is little that they want, that nature has had to give. But as little does he know of the temper of a Red-skin, who has seen but one Indian or one tribe, as he knows of the colour of feathers who has only looked upon a crow. Now, friend steersman, just give the boat sheer towards yonder, low,

sandy point, and a favour will be granted at a short asking."

"For what?" demanded Middleton; "we are now in the swiftest of the current, and by drawing to the shore we shall lose the force of the stream."

"Your tarry will not be long," returned the old man, applying his own hand to the execution of that which he had requested. The oarsmen had seen enough of his influence with their leader not to dispute his wishes, and before time was given for further discussion on the subject, the bows of the boat had touched the land.

"Captain," resumed the other, untying his little wallet with great deliberation, and even in a manner to show he found satisfaction in the delay, "I wish to offer you a small matter of trade. No great bargain, mayhap; but still the best that one, of whose hand the skill of the rifle has taken leave, and who has become no better than a miserable trapper, can offer before we part."

"Part!" was echoed from every mouth among those who had so recently shared his dangers and profited by his care.

"What the devil, old trapper, do you mean to foot it to the settlements, when here is a boat that will float the distance in half the time that the jack-ass, the Doctor has given the Pawnee, could trot along the same?"

"Settlements, boy! It is long sin' I took my leave of the waste and wickedness of the settlements and the villages. If I live in a clearing here, it is one of the Lord's making, and I have no hard thoughts on the matter; but never again shall I be seen running wilfully into the danger of immoralities."

"I had not thought of parting," answered Middleton, endeavouring to seek some relief from the uneasiness he felt, by turning his eyes on the sympathizing countenances of his friends; "on the contrary, I had hoped and believed that you would have accompanied us below, where I give you a sacred pledge, no-

thing shall be wanting to make your days comfortable."

"Yes, lad, yes; you would do your endeavours; but what are the strivings of man against the working of the devil? Ay, if kind offers and good wishes could have done the thing, I might have been a congress-man, or perhaps a governor, years agone. Your grand'ther wished the same, and there are them still living in the Otsego mountains, as I hope, who would gladly have given me a palace for my dwelling. But what are riches without content! My time must now be short, at any rate, and I hope it's no mighty sin for one, who has acted his part honestly near ninety winters and summers, to wish to pass the few hours that remain in comfort. If you think I have done wrong in coming thus far to quit you again, Captain, I will own the reason of the act without shame or backwardness. Though I have seen so much of the wilderness, it is not to be gainsayed, that my feelings, as well as

my skin, are white. Now it would not be a fitting spectacle, that yonder Pawnee Loups should look upon the weakness of an old warrior, if weakness he should happen to show in parting for ever from those he has reason to love, though he may not set his heart so strongly on them as to wish to go into the settlements in their company."

"Harkee, old trapper," said Paul, clearing his throat with a desperate effort, as if he was determined to give his voice a clear exit; "I have just one bargain to make, since you talk of trading, which is neither more nor less than this. I offer you, as my side of the business, one half of my shanty, nor do I much care if it be the biggest half; the sweetest and the purest honey that can be made of the wild locust; always enough to eat, with now and then a mouthful of venison, or, for that matter, a morsel of buffaloe's hump, seeing that I intend to push my acquaintance with the animal; and as good and

as tidy cooking as can come from the hands of one like Ellen Wade, here, who will shortly be Nelly somebody-else, and altogether such general treatment as a decent man might be supposed to pay to his best friend, or, for that matter, to his own father. In return for the same, you ar' to give us at odd moments some of your ancient traditions, perhaps a little wholesome advice on occasions, in small quantities at a time, and as much of your agreeable company as you please."

"It is well—it is well, boy," returned the old man, fumbling at his wallet; "honestly offered, and not unthankfully declined—but it cannot be; no, it can never be."

"Venerable venator," said Dr. Battius; "there are obligations which every man owes to society and to human nature. It is time that you should return to your countrymen, to deliver up some of those stores of experimental knowledge that you have doubtless ob-

tained by so long a sojourn in the wilds; which, however they may be corrupted by preconceived opinions, will prove acceptable bequests to those whom, as you say, you must shortly leave for ever."

"Friend physicianer," returned the trapper, looking the other steadily in the face, "as it would be no easy matter to judge of the temper of the rattler by considering the fashions of the moose, so it would be hard to speak of the usefulness of one man by thinking too much of the deeds of another. You have your gifts like others, I suppose, and little do I wish to disturb them. But as to me, the Lord has made me for a doer and not a talker, and therefore do I consider it no harm to shut my ears to your invitation."

"It is enough," interrupted Middleton; "I have seen and heard so much of this extraordinary man, as to know that persuasions will not change his purpose. First we will hear your request, my

friend, and then we will consider what may be best done for your advantage."

"It is a small matter, Captain," returned the old man, succeeding at length in opening his bundle. "A small and trifling matter is it, to what I once used-to-could offer in the way of bargains; but then it is the best I have, and therein not to be despised. Here are the skins of four beavers that I took, it might be a month, afore we met, and here is another from a racoon, that is of no great matter to be sure, but which may serve to make weight atween us."

"And what do you propose to do with them?"

"I offer them in lawful barter. Them knaves, the Siouxes, the Lord forgive me for ever believing it was the Konzas, have stolen the best of my traps, and driven me altogether to make-shift inventions, which might foretel a dreary winter for me, should my time stretch into another season. I wish you therefore to take the skins, and to offer them

to some of the trappers you will not fail to meet below, and to send the same into the Pawnee village in my name. Be careful to have my mark painted on them; a letter N, with a hound's ear and the lock of a rifle. There is no Red-skin who will then dispute my right. For all which trouble I have little more to offer than my thanks, unless my friend, the bee-hunter here, will accept of the racoon, and take on himself the special charge of the whole matter."

"If I do, may I be ——!" The mouth of Paul was stopped by the pretty hand of Ellen, and he was obliged to swallow the rest of the sentence, which he did with a species of emotion which bore no slight resemblance to the progress of strangulation.

"Well, well," returned the old man, meekly, "I hope there is no heavy offence in the offer. I know that the skin of a racoon is of small price, but then it was no mighty labour that I asked in return."

"You entirely mistake the meaning of our friend," interrupted Middleton, who observed that the bee-hunter was looking in every direction but the right one, and that he was utterly unable to make his own vindication: "he did not mean to say that he declined the charge, but merely that he refused all compensation. It is unnecessary, however, to say more of this; it shall be my office to see that the debt of gratitude we owe is properly discharged, and that all your necessities shall be anticipated."

"Anan!" said the old man, looking up inquiringly into the other's face, as if to ask an explanation.

"It shall all be as you wish. Lay the skins with my baggage. We will bargain for you as for ourselves."

"Thankee, thankee, Captain; your gran'ther was of a free and generous mind. So much so, in truth, that those just people, the Delawares, called him the 'Open-hand.' I wish, now, I was as I used to be, in order that I might

send in the lady a few delicate martens for her tippets and overcoats, just to show you that I know how to give courtesy for courtesy. But do not expect the same, for I am too old to give a promise. It will be all just as the Lord shall see fit. I can offer *you* nothing else, for I have'nt liv'd so long in the wilderness not to know the scrupulous ways of a gentleman."

"Harkee, old trapper," cried the bee-hunter, striking his own hand into the open palm which the other had extended, with a report but little below the crack of a rifle, "I have just two things to say. Firstly, that the Captain has told you my meaning better than I can myself; and, secondly, if you want a skin, either for your private use or to send abroad, I have it at your service, and that is the skin of one Paul Hover."

The old man returned the grasp he received, and opened his mouth to the utmost, in his extraordinary, silent laugh.

"You couldn't have given such a squeeze, boy, when the Teton squaws were about you with the knives!" he said. "Ah! you are in your prime, and in your vigour and happiness, if honesty lies in your path." Then the expression of his rugged features suddenly changed to a look of seriousness and thought. "Come hither, lad," he said, leading the bee-hunter by a button to the land, and speaking apart in a tone of admonition and confidence, "much has passed atween us on the pleasures and respectableness of a life in the woods or on the borders. I do not now mean to say that all you have heard is not true; but different tempers call for different employments. You have taken to your bosom, there, a good and kind child, and it has become your duty to consider her, as well as yourself, in setting forth in life. You are a little given to skirting the settlements, but, to my poor judgment, the girl would be more like a flourishing flower in the sun of a clearing, than in

the winds of a prairie. Therefore forget any thing you may have heard from me, which is nevertheless true, and turn your mind on the ways of the inner country."

Paul could only answer with a squeeze, that would have brought tears from the eyes of most men, but which produced no other effect on the indurated muscles of the other, than to make him laugh and nod, as if he would say he received the same as a pledge that the bee-hunter would remember his advice. The trapper then turned away from his rough but warm-hearted companion, and having called Hector from the boat, he seemed anxious still to utter a few words more—

"Captain," he at length resumed, "I know when a poor man talks of credit, he deals in a delicate word according to the fashions of the world; and when an old man talks of life, he speaks of that which he may never see; nevertheless there is one thing I will say, and that is

not so much on my own behalf as on that of another person. Here is Hector, a good and faithful pup, that has long outlived the time of a dog, and, like his master, he looks more to comfort now, than to any deeds in running. But the creatur' has his feelings as well as a Christian. He has consorted latterly with his kinsman, there, in such a sort as to find great pleasure in his company, and I will acknowledge that it touches my feelings to part the pair so soon. If you will set a value on your hound, I will endeavour to send it to you in the spring, more especially should them same traps come safe to hand; or, if you dislike parting with the animal altogether, I will just ask you for his loan through the winter. I think I can see my pup will not last beyond that time, for I have judgment in these matters, since many is the friend, both hound and Red-skin, that I have seen depart in my day, though the Lord hath not

yet seen fit to order his angels to sound forth my name."

"Take him, take him," cried Middleton; "take all or any thing!"

The old man whistled the younger dog to the land; and then he proceeded to the final adieus. Little was said on either side. The trapper took each person solemnly by the hand, and uttered something friendly and kind to all. Middleton was perfectly speechless, and was driven to affect busying himself among the baggage. Paul whistled with all his might, and even Obed took his leave with an effort that bore the appearance of a desperate philosophical resolution. When he had made the circuit of the whole, the old man with his own hands shoved the boat into the current, wishing God to speed them. Not a word was spoken, nor a stroke of the oar given, until the travellers had floated past a knoll that hid the trapper from their view. He was last seen

standing on the low point, leaning on his rifle, with Hector crouched at his feet, and the younger dog frisking along the sands in the playfulness of youth and vigour.

CHAPTER XI.

Methought I heard a voice—

SHAKSPEARE.

THE water-courses were at their height, and the boat went down the swift current like a bird. The passage proved prosperous and speedy. In less than a third of the time that would have been necessary for the same journey by land, it was accomplished by the favour of those rapid rivers. Issuing from one stream into another, as the veins of the human body communicate with the larger channels of life, they soon entered the grand artery of the western waters, and landed safely at the very door of the father of Inez.

The joy of Don Augustin, and the embarrassment of the worthy father Ignatius, may easily be imagined. The former wept and returned thanks to Heaven; the latter returned thanks and did not weep. The mild provincials were too happy to raise any questions on the character of so joyful a restoration, and, by a sort of general consent, it soon came to be an admitted opinion, that the bride of Middleton had been kidnapped by a villain, and that she was restored to her friends by human agency. There were, as respects this belief, certainly a few sceptics, but then they enjoyed their doubts in private, with that species of sublimated and solitary gratification that a miser finds in gazing at his growing but useless hoards.

In order to give the worthy priest something to employ his mind, Middleton made him the instrument of uniting Paul and Ellen. The former consented to the ceremony, because he found that all his friends laid great stress on the

matter; but shortly after he led his bride into the plains of Kentucky, under the pretence of paying certain customary visits to sundry members of the family of Hover. While there he took occasion to have the marriage properly solemnized by a justice of the peace of his acquaintance, in whose ability to forge the nuptial chain he had much more faith than in that of all the gownsmen within the pale of Rome. Ellen, who appeared conscious that some extraordinary preventives might prove necessary to keep one of so erratic a temper as her partner within the proper matrimonial boundaries, raised no objections to these double knots, and therefore all parties were content.

The local importance Middleton had acquired by his union with the daughter of so affluent a proprietor as Don Augustin, united to his personal merit, attracted the attention of the government. He was soon employed in various situations of responsibility and confidence,

which both served to elevate his character in the public estimation, and to afford the means of patronage. The bee-hunter was among the first of those to whom he saw fit to extend his favour. It was far from difficult to find situations suited to the abilities of Paul, in the state of society that existed three-and-twenty years ago in those regions. The efforts of Middleton and Inez, in behalf of her husband, were warmly and sagaciously seconded by Ellen, and they succeeded, in process of time, in working a great and beneficial change in his character. He soon became a land-holder, then a prosperous cultivator of the soil, and shortly after a town officer. By that progressive change in fortune, which, in the republic, is often seen to be so singularly accompanied by a corresponding improvement in knowledge and self-respect, he went on from step to step, until his wife enjoyed the maternal delight of seeing her children placed far beyond the danger of return-

ing to that state from which both their parents had issued. Paul is actually at this moment a member of the lower branch of the legislature of the State where he has long resided; and he is even notorious for making speeches that have a tendency to put that deliberative body in a good humour, and which, as they are based on great practical knowledge suited to the condition of the country, possess a merit that is much wanted in many more subtle and fine-spun theories that are daily heard in similar assemblies to issue from the lips of certain instinctive politicians. But all these happy fruits were the results of much care and of a long period of time. Middleton, who fills, with a credit better suited to the difference in their educations, a seat in a far higher branch of legislative authority, is the source from which we have derived most of the intelligence necessary to compose our legend. In addition to what he has related of Paul, and of his own continued

happiness, he has added a short narrative of what took place in a subsequent visit to the prairies, with which, as we conceive it a suitable termination to what has gone before, we shall judge it wise to conclude our present labours.

In the autumn of the year, that succeeded the season in which the preceding events occurred, the young man, still in the military service of the country, found himself on the waters of the Missouri, at a point not far remote from the Pawnee towns. Released from any immediate calls of duty, and strongly urged to the measure by Paul, who was in his company, he determined to take horse and cross the country to visit the partizan, and to inquire into the fate of his friend the trapper. As his train was suited to his functions and rank, the journey was effected with the usual privations and hardships that are the accompaniments of all travelling in a wild, but without any of those dangers and alarms that marked his former passage

through the same regions. When within a proper distance, he despatched an Indian runner, belonging to a friendly tribe, to announce the approach of himself and party, continuing his route at a deliberate pace, in order that the intelligence might, as was customary, precede his arrival. To the surprise of the travellers their message was unanswered. Hour succeeded hour, and mile after mile was passed, without bringing either the signs of an honourable reception, or of the more simple assurances of a friendly welcome. At length the cavalcade, at whose head rode Middleton and Paul, descended from the elevated plain, on which they had long been journeying, to a luxuriant bottom, that brought them to the level of the village of the Loups. The sun was beginning to fall, and a sheet of golden light was spread over the placid plain, lending to its even surface those glorious tints and hues, that the human imagination is apt to conceive, forms the embellishment of still

more imposing scenes. The verdure of the year yet remained, and herds of horses and mules were gazing peacefully in the vast natural pasture, under the keeping of vigilant Pawnee boys. Paul pointed out among them the well-known form of Asinus, sleek, fat, and apparently luxuriating in the fulness of content, as he stood with reclining ears and closed eye-lids, seemingly musing on the exquisite nature of his present indolent enjoyment.

The route of the party led them at no great distance from one of those watchful youths, who was charged with a trust so heavy as the principal wealth of his tribe. He heard the trampling of the horses, and cast his eye aside, but instead of manifesting either curiosity or alarm, his look was instantly returned whence it had been withdrawn, to the spot where the village was known to stand.

"There is something remarkable in all this," muttered Middleton, half of

fended at what he conceived to be not only a slight to his rank, but offensive to himself, personally; "yonder boy has heard of our approach, or he would not fail to notify his tribe, and yet he scarcely deigns to favour us with a glance. Look to your arms, men; it may be necessary to let these savages feel our strength."

"Therein, Captain, I think you're in an error," returned Paul; "if honesty is to be met on the prairies at all, you will find it in our old friend Hard-Heart; neither is an Indian to be judged of by the rules of a white. See! we are not altogether slighted, for here comes a party at last to meet us, though it is a little pitiful as to show and numbers."

Paul was right in both particulars. A groupe of horsemen were at length seen wheeling round a little copse and advancing across the plain directly towards them. The advance of this party was slow and dignified. As it drew nigh, the partizan of the Loups was seen at

its head, followed by a dozen of the younger warriors of his tribe. They were all unarmed, nor did they even wear about their persons any of those ornaments or feathers, which are considered as much to be testimonials of respect to the guest an Indian receives, as an evidence of his own rank and importance.

The meeting was friendly, though a little restrained on both sides. Middleton, jealous of his own consideration no less than of the authority of his government, suspected some undue influence on the part of the agents of the Canadas, and, as he was determined to maintain the authority of which he was the representative, he felt himself constrained to manifest a hauteur that he was actually far from feeling. It was not so easy to penetrate the motives of the Pawnees. Calm, dignified, and yet far from repulsive, they set an example of courtesy, blended with reserve, that many a diplo-

matist of the most polished court might have strove in vain to imitate.

In this manner the two parties continued their course to the town. Middleton had time during the remainder of the ride, to revolve in his mind all the probable reasons which his ingenuity could suggest for this strange reception. Although he was accompanied by a regular interpreter, the chiefs made their salutations in a manner that dispensed with his services. Twenty times the Captain turned his glance on his former friend, endeavouring to read the expression of his rigid features. But every effort and all conjectures proved equally futile. The eye of Hard-Heart was fixed, composed, and a little anxious; but as to every other emotion impenetrable. He neither spoke himself nor seemed willing to invite his visitors to speak; it was therefore necessary for Middleton to adopt the patient manners of his com-

panions, and to await the issue for the explanation.

When they entered the town, the whole of its inhabitants were seen collected in an open space, where they were arranged with the customary deference to age and rank. The whole formed a large circle, in the centre of which were perhaps a dozen of the principal chiefs. Heard-Heart waved his hand as he approached, and, as the mass of bodies opened, he rode through, followed by all his companions. Here they dismounted, and as the beasts were led apart, the strangers found themselves environed by a thousand grave, composed, but solicitous faces.

Middleton gazed about him in growing concern, for no cry, no song, no shout, welcomed him among a people from whom he had so lately parted with regret. His uneasiness, not to say apprehensions, was shared by all his followers. Determination and stern resolution began to assume the place of

anxiety in every eye, as each man silently felt for his arms, and assured himself that his several weapons were in a state for instant and desperate service. But there was no answering symptom of hostility on the part of their hosts. Hard-Heart beckoned for Middleton and Paul to follow, leading the way towards the cluster of forms that occupied the centre of the circle. Here the visitors found a solution of all the movements which had given them so much reason for apprehension.

The trapper was placed on a rude seat, which had been made with studied care, to support his frame in an upright and easy attitude. The first glance of the eye told his former friends that the old man was at length called upon to pay the last tribute of nature. His eye was glazed, and apparently as devoid of sight as of expression. His features were a little more sunken and strongly marked than formerly; but there all change, so far as exterior was concerned,

might be said to have ceased. His approaching end was not to be ascribed to any positive malady, but had been a gradual and mild decay of the physical powers. Life, it is true, still lingered in his system, but it was as though at times entirely ready to depart, and then it would appear to reanimate the sinking form, as if reluctant to give up the possession of a tenement that had never been undermined by vice, nor corrupted by disease. It would have been no violent fancy to have imagined, that the spirit fluttered about the placid lips of the old woodsman, reluctant to depart from a shell that had so long given it an honest and an honourable shelter.

His body was so placed as to let the light of the setting sun fall full upon the solemn features. His head was bare, the long, thin locks of gray fluttering lightly in the evening breeze. His rifle lay upon his knee, and the other accoutrements of the chase were placed at his side, within reach of his hand. Be-

tween his feet lay the figure of a hound, with its head crouching to the earth as if it slumbered, and so perfectly easy and natural was its position, that a second glance was necessary to tell Middleton he saw only the skin of Hector, stuffed by Indian tenderness and ingenuity, in a manner to represent the living animal. His own dog was playing at a distance with the child of Tachechana and Mahtoree. The mother herself stood at hand, holding in her arms a second offspring, that might boast of a parentage no less honourable than that which belonged to a son of Hard-Heart. Le Balafré was seated nigh the dying trapper, with every mark about his person that the hour of his own departure also was not far distant. The rest of those immediately in the centre were aged men, who had apparently drawn near, in order to observe the manner in which a just and fearless warrior would depart on the greatest of his journies.

The old man was reaping the rewards of a life, so remarkable for its temperance and activity, in a tranquil and placid death. His vigour had in a manner endured to the very last. Decay, when it did occur, was rapid, but free from pain. He had hunted with the tribe in the spring, and even throughout most of the summer, when his limbs suddenly refused to perform their customary offices. A sympathizing weakness took possession of all his faculties, and the Pawnees believed that they were going to lose, in this unexpected manner, a sage and counsellor, whom they had begun both to love and respect. But, as we have already said, the immortal occupant seemed unwilling to desert its tenement. The lamp of life flickered without becoming extinguished. On the morning of the day on which Middleton arrived, there was a general reviving of the powers of the whole man. His tongue was again heard in wholesome maxims, and his eye, from time to time,

recognised the persons of his friends. It merely proved to be a brief and final intercourse with the world, on the part of one who had already been considered, as to mental communion, to have taken his leave of it for ever.

When he had placed his guests in front of the dying man, Hard-Heart, after a pause, that proceeded as much from sorrow as decorum, leaned a little forward and demanded—

"Does my father hear the words of his son?"

"Speak," returned the trapper, in tones that issued from his inmost chest, but which were rendered awfully distinct by the death-like stillness that reigned in the place. "I am about to depart from the village of the Loups, and shortly shall be beyond the reach of your voice."

"Let the wise chief have no cares for his journey," continued Hard-Heart, with an earnest solicitude that led him to forget, for the moment, that others

were waiting to address his adopted parent; "a hundred Loups shall clear his path from briars."

"Pawnee, I die as I have lived, a Christian man," resumed the trapper, with a force of voice that had the same startling effect on his hearers, as is produced by the trumpet, when its blast rises suddenly and freely on the air after its obstructed sounds have long been heard struggling in the distance; "as I came into life, so will I leave it. Horses and arms are not needed to stand in the presence of the Great Spirit of my people. He knows my colour, and according to my gifts will he judge my deeds."

"My father will tell my young men how many Mingoes he has struck, and what acts of valour and justice he has done, that they may know how to imitate him."

"A boastful tongue is not heard in the heaven of a white man!" solemnly

returned the old man. "What I have done He has seen. His eyes are always open. That which has been well done will he remember; wherein I have been wrong, will he not forget to chastise, though he will do the same in mercy. No, my son, a Pale-face may not sing his own praises, and hope to have them acceptable before his God!"

A little disappointed, the young partizan stepped modestly back, making way for the recent comers to approach. Middleton took one of the meagre hands of the trapper, and struggling to command his voice, he succeeded in announcing his presence. The old man listened, like one whose thoughts were dwelling on a very different subject, but when the other had succeeded in making him understand that he was present, an expression of joyful recognition passed over his faded features—

"I hope you have not so soon forgotten those whom you so materially served!"

Middleton concluded. "It would pain me to think my hold on your memory was so light."

"Little that I have ever seen is forgotten," returned the trapper; "I am at the close of many weary days, but there is not one among them all that I could wish to overlook. I remember you, with the whole of your company; ay, and your gran'ther, that went before you. I am glad that you have come back upon these plains, for I had need of one who speaks the English, since little faith can be put in the traders of these regions. Will you do a favour, lad, to an old and dying man?"

"Name it," said Middleton; "it shall be done."

"It is a far journey to send such trifles," resumed the old man, who spoke at short intervals, as strength and breath permitted; "a far and weary journey is the same; but kindnesses and friendships are things not to be forgotten.

There is a settlement among the Otsego hills—"

"I know the place," interrupted Middleton, observing that he spoke with increasing difficulty; "proceed to tell me what you would have done."

"Take, then, this rifle, and pouch and horn, and send them to the person whose name is graven on the plates of the stock. A trader cut the letters with his knife, for it is long that I have intended to send him such a token of my love."

"It shall be so. Is there more that you could wish?"

"Little else have I to bestow. My traps I give to my Indian son; for honestly and kindly has he kept his faith. Let him stand before me."

Middleton explained to the chief what the trapper had said, and relinquished his own place to the other.

"Pawnee," continued the old man, always changing his language to suit the person he addressed, and not unfre-

quently according to the ideas he expressed, "it is a custom of my people for the father to leave his blessing with the son, before he shuts his eyes for ever. This blessing I give to you; take it, for the prayers of a Christian man will never make the path of a just warrior to the blessed prairies either longer or more tangled. May the God of a white man look on your deeds with friendly eyes, and may you never commit an act that shall cause him to darken his face. I know not whether we shall ever meet again. There are many traditions concerning the place of Good Spirits. It is not for one like me, old and experienced though I am, to set up my opinions against a nation's. You believe in the blessed prairies, and I have faith in the sayings of my fathers. If both are true, our parting will be final; but if it should prove that the same meaning is hid under different words, we shall yet stand together, Pawnee, before the face of your Wahcon-

dah, who will then be no other than my God. There is much to be said in favour of both religions, for each seems suited to its own people, and no doubt it was so intended. I fear I have not altogether followed the gifts of my colour, inasmuch as I find it a little painful to give up for ever the use of the rifle and the comforts of the chase. But then the fault has been my own, seeing that it could not have been His. Ay, Hector," he continued, leaning forward a little, and feeling for the ears of the hound, "our parting has come at last, dog, and it will be a long hunt. You have been an honest, and a bold, and a faithful hound. Pawnee, you cannot slay the pup on my grave, for where a Christian dog falls, there he lies for ever, but you can be kind to him, after I am gone, for the love you bear his master."

"The words of my father are in my ears," returned the young partizan, making a grave and respectful gesture of assent.

"Do you hear what the chief has promised, dog?" demanded the trapper, making an effort to attract the notice of the insensible effigy of his hound. Receiving no answering look, nor hearing any friendly whine, the old man felt for the mouth, and endeavoured to force his hand between the cold lips. The truth then flashed upon him, although he was far from perceiving the whole extent of the deception. Falling back in his seat, he hung his head, like one who felt a severe and unexpected shock. Profiting by this momentary forgetfulness, two young Indians removed the skin, with the same delicacy of feeling that had induced them to attempt the pious fraud.

"The dog is dead!" muttered the trapper, after a pause of many minutes; "a hound has his time as well as a man; and well has he filled his days! Captain," he added, making an effort to wave his hand for Middleton, "I am glad you have come; for though kind, and well meaning according to the gifts

of their colour, these Indians are not the sort of men to lay the head of a white man in his grave. I have been thinking, too, of this dog at my feet; it will not do to set forth the opinion, that a Christian can expect to meet his hound again, still there can be little harm in placing what is left of so faithful a servant nigh the bones of his master."

"None in the least; it shall be done as you desire."

"I'm glad you think with me in this matter. In order then to save labour, lay the pup at my feet, or for that matter put him side by side. A hunter need never be ashamed to be found in company with his dog!"

"I charge myself with your wish."

The old man then made a long, and apparently a musing pause. At times he raised his eyes, wistfully, as if he would again address Middleton, but some innate feeling appeared ever to suppress his words. The other, who observed his hesitation, inquired in a way most likely

to encourage him to proceed, whether there was aught else, that he could wish to have done.

"I am without kith or kin in the wide world!" the trapper answered. "When I am gone, there will be an end of my race. We have never been chiefs; but honest and useful in our way, I hope it cannot be denied we have always proved ourselves. My father lies buried near the sea, and the bones of his son will whiten on the prairies."

"Name the spot, and your remains shall be placed by the side of your father," interrupted Middleton.

"Not so, not so, Captain. Let me sleep, where I have lived, beyond the din of the settlements. Still I see no need why the grave of an honest man should be hid, like a Red-skin in his ambushment. I paid a man in the settlements to make and put a graven stone at the head of my father's resting-place. It was of the value of twelve beaver-skins, and cunningly and curiously was

it carved. Then it told to all comers that the body of such a Christian lay beneath; and it spoke of his manner of life, of his years, and of his honesty. When we had done with the Frenchers in the old war, I made a journey to the spot, in order to see that all was rightly performed, and glad I am to say the workman had not forgotten his faith."

"And such a stone you would have at your grave?"

"I! no, no, I have no son but Hard-Heart, and it is little that an Indian knows of white fashions and usages. Besides, I am his debtor, already, seeing it is so little I have done since I have lived in his tribe. The rifle might bring the value of such a thing—but then I know it would give the boy pleasure to hang the piece in his hall, for many is the deer and the bird that he has seen it destroy. No, no, the gun must be sent to him whose name is graven on the lock!"

"But there is one, who would gladly

prove his affection in the way you wish; he, who owes you not only his own deliverance from so many dangers, but who inherits a heavy debt of gratitude from his ancestors. The stone shall be put at the head of your grave."

The old man extended his meagre hand, and gave the other a squeeze of thanks.

"I thought you might be willing to do it, but I was backward in asking the favour," he said, "seeing that you are not of my kin. Put no boastful words on the same, but just the name, the age, and the time of the death, with something from the holy book; no more, no more. My name will then not be altogether lost on 'arth; I need no more."

Middleton intimated his assent, and then followed a pause, that was only interrupted by distant and broken sentences from the dying man. He appeared now to have closed his accounts with the world, and to await merely for the final summons to quit it. Middle-

ton and Hard-Heart placed themselves on the opposite sides of his seat, and watched with melancholy solicitude the variations of his countenance. For two hours there was no very sensible alteration. The expression of his faded and time-worn features was that of a calm and dignified repose. From time to time he spoke, uttering some brief sentence in the way of advice, or asking some simple questions, concerning those in whose fortunes he still took a friendly interest. During the whole of that solemn and anxious period, each individual of the tribe kept his place in the most self-restrained patience. When the old man spoke, all bent their heads to listen; and when his words were uttered, they seemed to ponder on their wisdom and usefulness.

As the flame drew nigher to the socket, his voice was hushed, and there were moments when his attendants doubted whether he still belonged to the living. Middleton, who watched each

wavering expression of his weather-beaten visage, with the interest of a keen observer of human nature, softened by the tenderness of personal regard, fancied he could read the workings of the old man's soul in the strong lineaments of his countenance. Perhaps what the enlightened soldier took for the delusion of mistaken opinion, did actually occur, for who has returned from the unknown world to explain by what forms and in what manner he was introduced into its awful precincts! Without pretending to explain what must ever be a mystery to the quick, we shall simply relate facts as they occurred.

The trapper had remained nearly motionless for an hour. His eyes alone had occasionally opened and shut. When opened, his gaze seemed fastened on the clouds, which hung around the western horizon, reflecting the bright colours, and giving form and loveliness to the glorious tints of an American sun-set. The hour, the calm beauty of the sea

son, the occasion, all conspired to fill the spectators with solemn awe. Suddenly, while musing on the remarkable position in which he was placed, Middleton felt the hand which he held, grasp his own with incredible power, and the old man, supported on either side by his friends, rose upright to his feet. For a single moment he looked about him, as if to invite all in presence to listen, (the lingering remnant of human frailty) and then, with a fine military elevation of his head, and with a voice that might be heard in every part of that numerous assembly, he pronounced the emphatic word—

"Here!"

A movement so entirely unexpected, and the air of grandeur and humility, which were so strikingly united in the mien of the trapper, together with the clear and uncommon force of his utterance, produced a short period of confusion in the faculties of all present. When Middleton and Heard-Heart, who

had each involuntarily extended a hand to support the form of the old man, turned to him again, they found that the subject of their interest was removed for ever beyond the necessity of their care. They mournfully placed the body in its seat, and Le Balafré arose to announce the termination of the scene to the tribe. The voice of the old Indian seemed a sort of echo from that invisible world to which the spirit of the honest trapper had just departed.

"A valiant, a just, and a wise warrior has gone on the path which will lead him to the blessed grounds of his people!" he said. "When the voice of the Wahcondah called him, he was ready to answer! Go, my children; remember the just chief of the Pale-faces, and clear your own tracks from briars!"

The grave was made beneath the shade of some noble oaks. It has been carefully watched to the present hour by the Pawnees of the Loup, and is often shewn to the traveller and the trader as

a spot where a just white man sleeps. In due time the stone was placed at its head, with the simple inscription which the trapper had himself requested. The only liberty taken by Middleton was to add—"*May no wanton hand ever disturb his remains!*"

THE END.

SHACKELL AND BAYLIS, JOHNSON'S-COURT.